AUGUST 8th ISSUE, 1926
VOL. LIX No. 3

ADVENTURE

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1926
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PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

Leonard H. Nason
Georges Surdez
Harold Lamb
Talbot Mundy
Gordon MacCreagh
Nevil Henshaw
Edmund M. Littell
R. E. Hamilton
El Comancho
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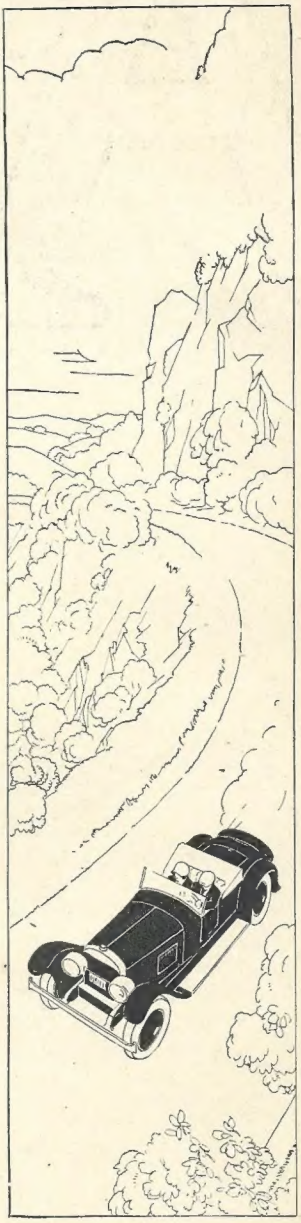

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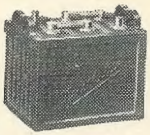

STORAGE BATTERIES FOR MOTOR-CARS AND RADIO

Adventure

Registered in U. S. Patent Office

August 8, 1926
Vol. LIX. No. 3

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

JOS. A. MOORE, President — LEVIN RANK, Secretary and Treasurer

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising seventy-four geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons, Fishing, Foresty, Aviation, Army Matters, North American Anthropology, Health on the Trail, Herpetology, Railroading and Entomology.

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One Complete Novel and Two Complete Novelettes

THE cowmen have no love for the sheep, and are ready to use any means to rid the valley of them. Things are looking bad for the peace of Bitter River Valley when *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* come riding into camp. "THE TROUBLE TRAILER," a complete novel by W. C. Tuttle, will appear in the next issue.

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THE Rio Sipapo wasn't well known to the few traders who visited its murky waters, but *Adolph Zorn* knew the country and the Indians before he left Europe. Perhaps this was why he defied the Gods. "THE GODS OF SIPAPO," a complete novelette by Arthur O. Friel, will appear in the next issue.

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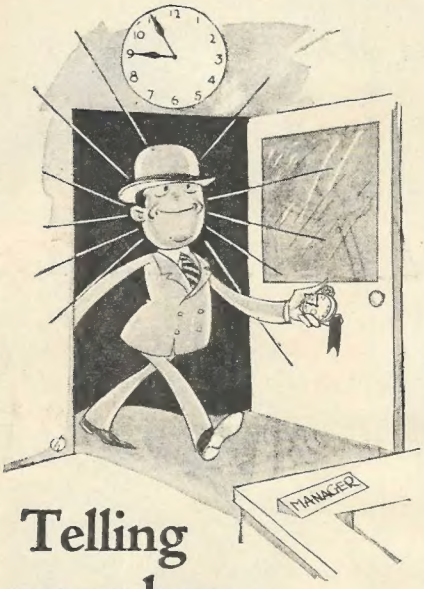

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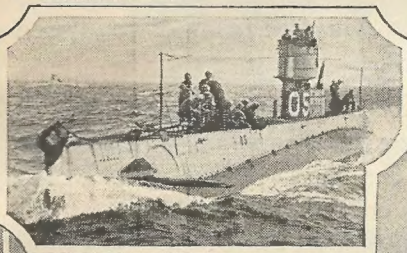
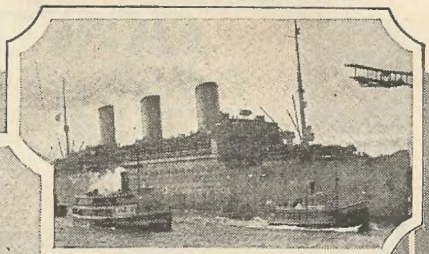
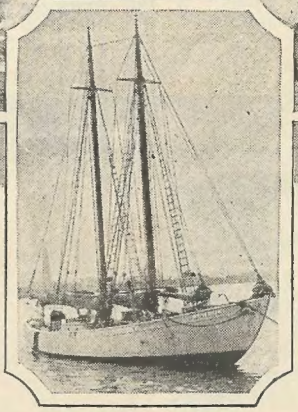
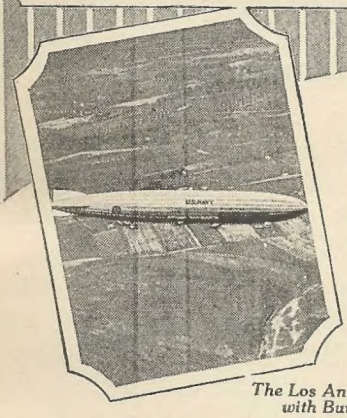






McMillan carries them to the Arctic



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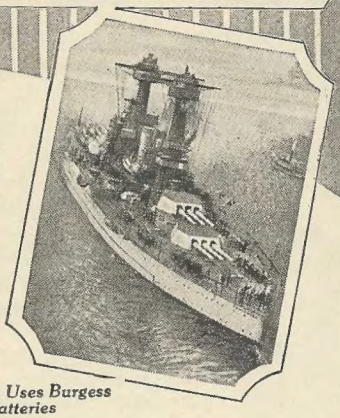

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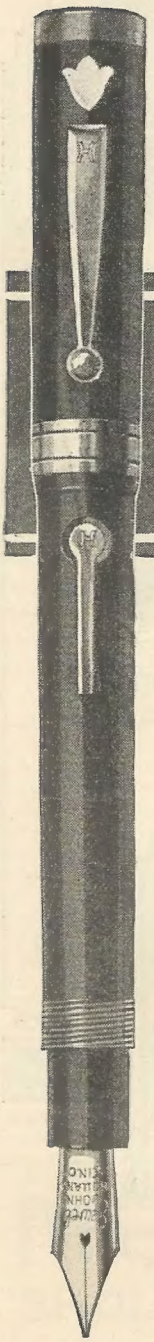

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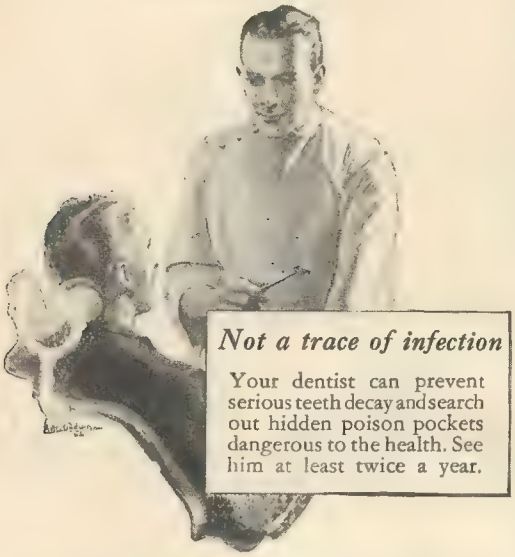

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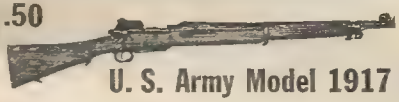

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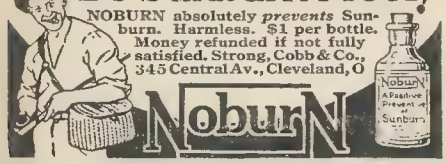

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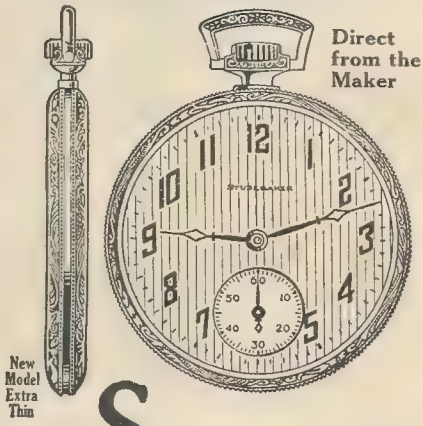

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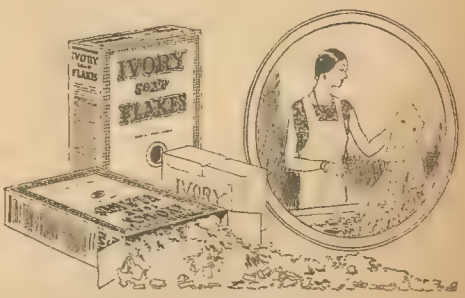

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The SHIELD

by Harold Lamb

A Complete Novelette

Author of "The Winged Rider," "The Book of the Tiger," etc.

Thus said Khalil el Khadr, my good lord, the far-wandering, the wise, the truth-telling and the never-fearing lord my master, favored of God—Khalil, the Badawán, who came from no city but the sands of Yamen, who rode to the great city of the iron men, the Franks—and of this city was his tale, often told to me, the unworthy, the scribe. Upon teller and hearer be the peace of God! Thus said he:

PRAISE to the Giver, who hath bestowed upon men the earth, with its vast spaces to wander in!

It was the year 603* It was near the setting of the sun, in the bazaar of the metal workers, which is a narrow street looking out upon the water. The water of the port of Costatinah was dark.

*1204 of the Christian era. Khalil's Costatinah is Constantinople. This and many other places named by the Arab scribe are altered hereafter to European names.

Men say that the water of the seas is black, and that is a lie. It is both gray and green, but to one who stands looking out upon it, when the sun dips toward the sea, it hath the seeming of darkness—yet not beneath the sun. There is gold beneath the sun. And this shining gold of the port lighted the street of the metal workers and the scheming face of Abou Asaid of Damascus, who sells daggers and sword blades.

"Harken, my Lord Khalil," said the weapon seller, "there is talk in the city."

"There is always talk," I made response.

But he stretched forth his hand and pulled together the leather curtains of his stall, so

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that he could look out and see who passed by, without being seen or heard.

"It hath reached my ears," he said again, "from the seamen of the harbor, that a fleet comes from Venice."

"Thine ears be overlong," I made answer then, "and thou art little the richer for it, O Abou Asaid. What is Venice?"

"If thine ears, O my Lord Khalil," he reproached me, "were inclined more to politics and less to the step of strange women, thou wert the wiser. Nay, Venice is the city of the Greater Sea whence come the hosts of the iron men, the Franks who have invaded the lands of the Muslimin. They are the barbarians, the faith-breakers, the slayers.

"They are fearless men. Their swords have two edges and are straight and heavy. A blow from such a sword breaks the rings of mail and the bones beneath. I have met them in Palestine.

"May they eat shame! This is a new host, and the fleet is vast indeed. The galliots bearing the warriors are as many as the sands of Yamen; the fighting galleys are beyond counting, and the store ships stretch from sky to sky."

Twice, thrice, even four times had these hosts of the Franks descended upon the barren coast of Palestine by land and sea—so my father and his father had said. At this time there was peace between Muslimin and Nazarene in Palestine. So I wondered why this host had set forth from Venice, and why it was coming to Constantinople.

"There are great lords upon this fleet," Abou Asaid resumed. "Nazarene lords from far Frankistan, and the King of the Venetians. He is an old man."

"It will be a fine sight," I said then, "these kings and their clans and their horses."

Abou Asaid looked out through the rift of his curtains, and ran his finger through his beard.

"The Emperor of Constantinople will not think it a fine sight," he explained under his breath. "He is a Greek."

"Yet he is a Nazarene." So I said, to get at the kernel in the shell of the weapon seller's words. And, indeed, Abou Asaid disgorged the thing that had been troubling him.

"The fleet of the Franks is coming to take Constantinople."

NOW I had seen the Emperor of Constantinople. Because I had come to the city on a mission, I had been allowed within the palace. The mission had been to escort a princess, the daughter of the emperor, out of Roum, to Scutari and into Constantinople. Other Nazarene lords had been in the escort, and though they called me a *saracin*, which is a robber, we had not quarreled on the way. And to hear my tales of other lands, the emperor, who was called Murtzuple, summoned me into his presence.

His palace had walls of beaten gold and azure, and its marble floors were carpeted. Upon the walls, done in mosaics, were pictures of the wars of his ancestors. There were many walls.

And this Murtzuple himself had a bold bearing. He is a dark man with a sallow skin, and restless eyes. Generous he is, for he gave to me a silk robe of honor and a horse of his own stable—a white horse of a Frankish breed, too heavy in the leg for my choice. And brave he is—though according to the custom of his fathers I was searched for weapons by eunuchs, and held by the arms and the cloak when I stood before him.

Two Frankish warriors he had on his right hand and three on his left, who leaned on their shields, full armed. Not a rat could have run upon this emperor without being cut down. Yet it was in my mind that Murtzuple had no liking of this shielding by the suspicion-rid eunuchs and the lords of his court.

Except the Seljuk Sultan of Egypt and the great Khan of Cathay there in no prince in the world so dignified and so treasure-burdened as this emperor who sat in the throne of the Cæsars.

And in all my journeys I had not seen a city so wealthy, with such massive walls as this city upon the Golden Horn.

"Surely that is a lie," I said to the weapon seller, when I had thought over his words, "because there is peace between the Nazarenes. And this is one of their holy cities."

Abou Asaid smiled and all the lines came out on his face.

"Little know ye, O Khalil, son of Abd 'Ullah, the Badawán. Of well sired horses and edged weapons and girls who walk with antelope grace—of such matters thou art

conversant, beyond doubt. By the breath of Ali, have I not sold daggers to the Greeks fourfold in the last days? Eh, they labor at building stone casters on the walls. But I have heard what I have heard."

And at last he made clear to me why he had called me into his stall.

There would be war, he said, between the Greeks of the city and the Franks from over the black water. We would both profit by it if I were to go again to the palace of the Blachernae, where the Emperor Murtzuple sat in council, and swear that I was ready to serve him with a hundred men. Already I had some slight favor with the Greek emperor, and Abou Asaid would drum up the hundred men from the scoundrels of Galata, and arm them himself.

The emperor, Abou Asaid explained truthfully, was already served by men-at-arms from Genoa and the island of England that lies beyond the Gates. These barbarians from England were named Saxons; and in his host were also warriors from the far north—tall men with watery blue eyes and yellow hair, and Tatars from the steppes of the east. They were men of all faiths and many Muslimin.

I was a *saracin*, in the eyes of the Greeks. But the lords who had come with me from Roum had told in the city how I was a chieftain's son, who had fought in the battles of Granada and Palestine. And Abou Asaid had praised me as a swordsman unmatched, and an Arab without fear. And that was a lie, but the praise was pleasing.

"The emperor can reward greatly," he ended. "Thou hast of him already a journey-gift. What then will be his service-grant?"

"Aye, what?"

"Why, a score of fair-faced slaves—precious stones to fill thy cupped hands—perhaps a province or a ship."

It was Abou Asaid's thought that he would share this wealth with me.

Indeed, I had no mind to the venture. Among my people there is a saying that a sword once drawn is not to be sheathed without honor. What part had an Arab in the quarrels of the Franks? I held myself as something better than the barbarian Tatars and Saxons. As for Abou Asaid, he was a merchant, with a purse to be filled.

"Consider, O my Lord Khalil," he cried when he read no agreement in my eyes. "This Greek hath a fair mind to thee. Nay, he hath honored thee with a horse of his stables, so that when thou goest forth, there is a canopy held over thee and a trumpeter to go before, in token thou art an honored guest of Murtzuple. In gratitude—"

"Make an end of words. I will not set foot upon this path."

The gifts of the emperor had been for service rendered, and as for hospitality—he had let me stand before him with my arms held.

"Then consider this, O son of Abd 'Ullah. If the barbarian Franks take the city, they will care not at all for horse or canopy or trumpeter. They will cut thee down for a *saracin*, and thy days will be ended without honor."

A HORSE had passed the stall where we sat. Such a horse as would have brought joy to Omar the mighty—a gray desert-bred, slender of limb, with arched neck and eyes of fire.

This gray beauty picked his way through the narrow street of the metal workers as daintly as a favorite slave of a great prince, who goes where he wills. And the rider of the *kohlani* was a girl-child, who was surely no slave.

No man sat before her, and she herself sat not upon one side, after the fashion of the Frankish woman. One knee was crooked over the low saddle peak, and her face was toward the *kohlani's* head.

Her face I did not see through the crack in the curtain, but her long hair was the hue of gold. About her brow was a narrow silver filet, and she looked not to one side or the other.

"Upon thee the salute, and long years of life!" I bade farewell to Abou Asaid, the father of plots, and sought my horse.

As usual, my Greek trumpeter and his mates who held the canopy were taking their ease in some near-by wine shop and I called them not. There is a time for ceremony and a time for solitude.

I mounted the white stallion with a high-backed Frankish saddle, covered with cloth of gold, and reined after the splendid gray horse. I had seen that the rider was not veiled, so she could not be a Muslimin. Only one servant—and he a craggy fellow on an ignoble nag—followed her; her blue cloak and vestment bore no precious stones. She could not be the daughter of a wealthy

sire. And yet the *kohlani* racer would bring a chieftain's ransom.

I wished well to see the horse near at hand and the face of his rider.

Girl and servant paced up the street of the metal workers, and turned into a muddy alley, where the wooden houses nearly came together overhead—a place of foul odors, with children naked in the mud and women that screamed like the harridans they were.

From the alley the gray horse climbed to an open place, paved with flagstones, and began to trot. As if the way were familiar, he threaded a path among scattered marble columns and made toward a great square structure of stone.

There was a gate in this half-ruined wall, and through the gate went the horse and the girl with a rush, as of a dart loosed from the hand. Within the gate it was dark, but in a moment we came out upon the grass of a long enclosure. Here the glow of sunset lighted the sky, with its first bright stars.

It was *al-maidan*, the Place of Horses.* At this place the Greeks held races and watched combats between beasts. Tiers of stone balconies looked down on the grass plain, but at this hour the seats were empty.

I pushed past the servant, who turned with an oath when he heard the rush of my stallion. I loosed the rein and spoke to the white horse, who stretched his great limbs in a ponderous gallop. Eh, the Franks chose their horses for weight, not for pace.

Ahead of me the gray *kohlani* skimmed over the race-course like a hawk unhooded. I gained not at all. And yet the girl heard the beat of the stallion's hoofs and reined in, turning the gray horse sharply to meet me. I drew in the ring-bit, and pulled the stallion back on his heels a spear's length from her.

In her hand was neither whip nor dagger. The cloud of her light hair was about her glowing face, and her eyes were those of a child who knew no fear.

Nay, she flinched not when she saw my helmet with the pointed peak and long nasal, and chain drop, my black cloak, and high-girdled *chimitar* and the round shield upon my shoulder. Armed was I, and had come upon her unawares. An arrow's flight away the servant was beating on his nag with his stick.

"Praise be to the Maker," I cried in my Arab speech, "of such a horse, and so fair a woman."

For a second she looked into my eyes, and the blood warmed in my veins.

"Who art thou?" she asked at once, and though she seemed to understand my speech her words were in the Greek tongue. At the same instant she motioned back the vagabond who was coming at me with a stick. He hung back, grumbling.

"I am Khalil the Badawán."

It was well for the pair of them that she held off the barbarian with his staff, for if he had touched me with the stick I must have slain him, and I had no mind to that. She was a maiden of quick understanding, and surely a Frank. Her eyes were gray—not the dark ox-eyes of Greek women. Even though she were the child of a noble-born sire, I could not dismount to speak to a barbarian Nazarene.

"I have heard of thee, Khalil." All at once she smiled, and it was pleasing. "Thou art a prince—of boasters. Men say thou dost ride in the quarters of the city behind a Greek trumpeter."

Eh, there was a sting in the sweetness of this barbarian girl.

"I ride in the fashion ordained by thine emperor," said I. "And at the court of this emperor I told the tales that were besought of me, but no man in this city of the Greeks hath heard my tongue boast of thy noble men and knights overthrown by this, my sword."

"Yet even now a woman hears and likes it not," she cried at once, tossing her head. "Nor do I owe aught of fealty to the Greek or his lineage."

It had not come into my mind to speak to this maiden. I had come to see the *kohlani* racer. Yet it stirred my interest when she maintained that she was no servant of Murtzuple. Why should a young barbarian girl dwell in Constantinople the Great, without kinsmen to guard her?

"This horse," said I, "is of royal descent. How came he to thy hand?"

Her eyes flashed and she smiled again.

"By the sword, my Lord Khalil," she cried in her clear voice. "He was taken from the paynims of Palestine by a great and very bold man, who gave him to me."

"By whom?" I asked.

She made answer with pride.

"By Richard, Sieur de Brienne."

"*Ricard*," I said after her, and thought

*The Hippodrome.

that I had heard the name spoken before.

But surely there were many knights of that name who had sewn the Nazarene cross upon their *khalats* and had sought death or honor in Palestine. It was clear that this palladian of the Franks had brought the gray racer to Constantinople, as a gift to the maiden. And I did not think that he was father or brother to her. When I looked again into her eyes, I did not think he was her lover, because her pride was that of a child in a hero.

"Take care not to overfeed the gray horse," I said when I had feasted my eyes upon him. "And keep a guard at his stable. There are more thieves than rats in this city, and there are many rats."

"Try to take him!" she laughed up at me.

"From thy *Ricard*, I would take the horse," I said, "but not from a child."

It came into my mind that if there should be a battle between the Greeks and the Franks, the girl would be carried off by some one or other, and the gray horse might fall to me—

"Thou art a bold warrior, O Khalil," she made answer, after a moment, "yet I do not think thee the boaster men proclaim thee."

"Y'Allah!" I cried. "Thou art a bold barbarian. Upon thee be the peace. I have seen the horse, and I go!"

"Bethink thee, Lord Khalil," she said as I turned my rein, "the city will be a place of peril for paynimry within the week. Wilt thou not leave the walls before the Franks come with their power?"

Indeed, until now, that had been my thought. But in the siege and the tumult there would be opportunity to win the *kohlani*, and I decided to await this opportunity.

"What is ordained may not be altered," I said to her. "Look well to the horse!"

MY PEOPLE have a saying: "When God's earth is so wide, why dwell within walls?"

Of this saying Abou Asaid reminded me when I came to his stall the following day to watch for the gray horse and the barbarian girl. He had sold most of his daggers and javelins to the Greeks at high prices, and was bundling up his own belongings, to fly from the city with the next *karwán*. He said that most of the Muslimin were leaving, for dread of the Franks, and he besought me earnestly to go with him.

From Abou Asaid I learned the name of the barbarian girl. It was Irene. Every day she had passed through the street of the metal workers on the gray horse and her face had become known, being beautiful. She lived alone in the city, in a small stone house, close to the church of the Greek patriarch.

The barbarian Irene was under the protection of the patriarch, so that the Nazarenes did not molest her. In the stone house with her were also an old woman and a man slave—the one I had seen accompanying her. Abou Asaid did not know where the gray horse was kept.

"On thy head be the folly!" he said in farewell. "At any hour the emperor may give order to close the gates. Come away while ye may!"

"The horse is to my liking."

"O Khalil, are there not maids enough in Yamen, that thou should'st cast eyes upon an infidel?"

Then a sudden thought struck him, and he demanded that I go with some of his lads and seize the maiden, and the horse, too, if I willed, and he would send his pack-animals and servants by way of the stone house and halt there, under pretense of shifting the loads. Thereupon—so said he—I should bring forth the barbarian captive, veiled, and place her among his family. At once the *karwán* would move on with a great tumult and pass through the gate. At Tanais or Sarai such a beautiful Frank would fetch three to four hundred gold bezants.

So planned Abou Asaid, promising that a hundred gold pieces should be mine, in addition to the horse. There was great confusion and running about in the city, and all this might easily be done.

Abou Asaid was only a seller of goods, and desired greatly the aid of my sword on the journey.

"And if we be stopped at the gate?" I asked, to try him.

"Have I not eyes and ears, O son of Abd 'Ullah? Four days ago I went to the Domastikos of the imperial palace, after paying silver to his officers. To him I gave gold in a purse and when he had weighed the purse he gave me a *talsmin*. Look!"

Abou Asaid drew from his cloak a little staff, like a mace. Only there was a crown on the head of the staff, a gilded crown, and letters.

"With this token from the high lord I may pass with my goods and family and servants through any gate, save the palace itself. Who, then, would stop us?"

"Many," I made response, "if I rode the gray racer. Surely he is known from Galata to the Seven Towers!"

Abou Asaid combed his beard.

"I will give thee half the price of the girl Irene. Leave, then, the horse."

"Nay," I said, and again, "nay!"

When did a son of my clan soil his honor by taking the payment of a slave dealer? I could not drag the barbarian girl from her house like a pigeon from the toils. And Abou Asaid lacked heart to make the attempt himself.

He lifted his hands, shook his head and hurried forth to berate his boys at the packs. So he ceased to make plots for me, nor did I ever see him again. Yet I remembered the little mace with the writing upon it.

Instead of going with Abou Asaid, I went to look at the stone house where the gray horse was kept. It was on the side of the little river, facing Galata. And it was inside the brick wall of the place called a *monastir*.

The *monastir* had a garden of olive trees and poplars, and in a corner of this garden beside a dry canal was the house, a tiny house of veined marble with wooden pillars by the door. The space between the house and the corner of the brick wall was fenced in and here the gray horse was penned.

When I spoke to him he came forward and permitted me to touch his neck and stroke him behind the ears. Then he pretended to bite at my hand, and sprang away.

Eh, it would have been a simple matter to jump on his back—once a bridle was slipped over his head—and make him leap the canal, and rush through the outer gate.

But there was the garden. On this side of the canal it sheltered blind and aged men, Nazarenes who were cared for by the patriarch; and on the other side was the *monastir*, where monks walked to and fro in garments of brown hair.

They showed no anger at sight of me—I had slung my sword within my cloak. It was a place of peace. Pigeons stalked about in the sun, and by the edge of the canal sat a group of young girls with white cloths on their heads—as fair as lilies.

At the knee of a black-robed priest stood a boy of nine years, who read aloud from a parchment roll in his hand. What he read I knew not, but his voice was clear as a flute, and the damsels listened attentively.

Beyond the trees, in the center of the garden, rose the cupola of the patriarch's church, as a shepherd's watch-tower, rising from a knoll, guards against the approach of an enemy.

There was no enemy within the brick wall, though any man of manner might enter—for the patriarch and his flock, being servants of the Roumi's God, were above molestation. And there was a man sitting on the edge of the canal who preened himself like a peacock.

He was as bright as a peacock, a bearded Persian with plumes in his turban clasp, and a purple cloak, and a round shield slung on his shoulder, and an array of daggers in his girdle. His *chimitar* was too heavy to handle well—though he was a big man.

When I looked at him, he glanced at the pigeons and the Roumi maids and the sky, and at everything but me. Then it came to me that I had seen him leaning against one of the gates of the Place of Horses the evening before. I went and stood beside him.

"What seekest thou?" I asked.

He pretended surprize.

"I watch."

"Thou wert sent?"

Out of the corner of an eye he looked at me shrewdly.

"I came. No one is forbidden this garden, O my Lord."

"Or *Al-Maidan*. Yet a certain questing is forbidden."

And I opened the cloak to let him see the *chimitar* slung from my shoulder. And he rolled over on his haunches to stare and assert innocence.

"Nay, O Badawán, I know thee not. I swear by the breath of Ali I seek thee not. I was sent to watch—"

The words left his lips, and I heard a light step behind us. The barbarian girl named Irene was coming down the path from the church, an old woman trudging behind her. The foot-bridge across the canal was near my Persian and so she approached us with only a glance of amusement for me. But she stopped and frowned at the warrior, who had turned his head, and was making clumsy pretense of throwing crumbs to the fluttering pigeons.

Presently, when she did not move away,

he rose up and swaggered toward the gate, she watching him with blazing eyes. When he was beyond hearing she turned to me.

"The city gates are closed, Khalil, and thou hast tarried too long."

"Look then to the charger."

I saluted her and went forth, yielding the path to the grave-faced men of the *monastir*. I had heard it said that the damsels who listened to the young boy reading were daughters of Nazarene lords, even of kings, and I wondered whether the barbarian were such. But she wore her hair gleaming upon her shoulders and they had theirs hidden behind white cloths. The closing of the gates seemed to bring her joy, as if it heralded the coming of one she loved.

I hastened to overtake the Persian, and saw him step from the flagstones of the court into the maw of an alley. And before I reached the turning there arose a din as of dogs and wolves.

THERE was mud in the alley and gloom between smoke-blackened walls, and in the gloom I beheld my Persian, roaring and laying about him savagely with his clumsy blade. A few thieves and scoundrels were circling him, plucking at his garments and trying to drive a knife into him.

It was no quarrel of mine. For all his slashing and outcry, the Persian was getting the worst of it. And it came into my mind that he would be of use to me.

With the flat of my *chimitar* I struck the faces of the low-born nearest me, and when they fell the others ran. They had not a bit of bravery in them, and the flash of steel was enough to send them off. But the Persian was beside himself, still dealing lusty blows into the air.

"Dogs! Dung-bred slaves! Oho—ye flee from Arbogastes. *Tamen shud!* It is finished."

He charged after the wretches, then galloped back to slash at the two who had fallen. But these had taken to their heels, and he came and peered at me, wiping the sweat from his eyes.

"Dogs of Satan—curs they be, a score of them. Oho, they tucked up their skirts and fled like hyenas when they heard my shout. Thou didst see it? Come then! My throat is dry with shouting the war-shout. We shall taste Cyprian wine."

It had been my coming that routed the wretches, yet this bull-Persian saw fit to think otherwise. He scurried around looking for chance spoil, and, finding none, wiped his bloodless sword in a fold of his cloak. Then he rearranged his daggers, adjusted his turban and set off with his arm linked in mine.

Ever and anon he glanced over his shoulder, and he looked up and down the next street before diving into a Roumi wine-shop filled with Bokharians and Genoese men of the sea. Here my graceless rogue took cup in hand and cried out for all to hear that he had done two thieves to death. Such affairs were common enough in the alleys of this quarter, near the docks, and little heed was paid Arbogastes.

"Take water, an thou wilt, O Badawân!" he grunted, seeing that I would have no wine. "Eh, what is the harm, among unbelievers? There is no harm! Of a truth a single drop of wine is forbidden all believers, yet—behold, thou—I pour out the drop, and empty the cup myself. The law sayeth not, concerning cups. After all, the juice of the grape is trodden by the feet of fair maidens, and thou hast an eye for such."

He brushed out the two corners of his curled and oiled beard, and filled his cup again from the skin on the rack.

"From this day thou and I be brothers," he proclaimed. "How do men call thee, my Lord?"

Long ago my people of Al-Yamen, the Ibna of Al-Yamen, had descent from the Persian warriors, in the dawn of happenings. In that day and time the Persian swordsmen were men of pride. Now they have become boasters without shame, and this Arbogastes was no doubt compounded of Greek and Turkish fathers. Nevertheless, because he saw by the braids of hair on eye and ear that I was of Al-Yamen, he claimed fellowship.

"Khalil, el Khadr,* am I."

"A chieftain's son. *Wah*—this day is fortunate. Ask of me what thou wilt, only ask! By ——, Arbogastes is a man of courage also."

He puffed out his round cheeks, and his dark eyes glimmered shrewdly. Arbogastes, in the dram-shop, was a braver figure than Arbogastes beset in the alley. I think he knew that I had saved his skin, and wished to reward me in his way. The long purse at his girdle clinked heavily when he moved, and he moved his belly often. A

*El Khadr—the Valiant.

captain of guards, I thought him, in the service of some lord from whom he had learned insolence. And another thought came to me.

"Surely I have heard of Arbogastes," I made answer, as if greatly pleased, "and of his master, who is not less renowned than the emperor."

Arbogastes was strangely affected by these words. He glanced about him swiftly, emptied his cup, choked, and leaned close to my ear to whisper with the sigh of a bull.

"The time is not yet for such speech. My master, the Maga Domastikos, the very high chamberlain, has his finger on events, and gathers men through his gates."

He blinked like an owl, to show that he knew more than he would say. His words had opened up the path I meant to follow.

"I will speak with the Domastikos. Take me to him."

"Thou? Well, why not? But why?"

"There will be a siege. The gates are closed. A panther maddens itself by striking often. After the Roumis* have stood an onset or two from the Franks, they may massacre the Muslimin within the gates."

Arbogastes nodded. He had thought of that, it seemed.

"So," I explained, "by taking my place in the suite of a lord who is the equal of Murtzuple, almost—" Arbogastes nodded again, with a smirk—"I may escape the massacre and perchance render some service to the lord. As for thee—"

"What?" The Persian jangled his purse and looked inquisitive.

"Thou wert sent to watch the barbarian maid, Irene." I judged this to be so, nor did his face belie it. "The Domastikos, then, has an interest in her—"

"By Ali, and all the Companions, he longs for the girl as though she were a jewel of great price! At the church of the Greek patriarch, he saw her, and desired her at once. So, when he fared forth, he summoned me to follow her. It was no great task. I sought my lord and told him that she was nobly born, but her father, who was a Frankish *al-comes*,† was dead, and no men of her family were in the city. She was as a dove in a cage, without guardian—"

I thought of the warrior named *Ricard* who had given her the gray courser, saying naught of this to Arbogastes, whose tongue wagged on.

"—May my days be ended, Lord Khalil, but this maid doth not fill mine eye. Too young, lacking wisdom, and too lean i' the shanks. Yet my lord Menas, the Domastikos, burns with fever at thought of her. For the present he desires not to be seen at her gate, or to risk the anger of the patriarch by snatching this dove from the garden. But there will come a time when he, my master, will be able to go to the cage and take from it this dove. Then he will give me many pieces of gold and I shall have another matter to attend to."

The whisper ceased and Arbogastes waited for me to promise him more gold. But that is an evil promise to make, with his breed. It is better to let them expect.

"*Wai*, Arbogastes," I said, "a reward awaits thee at my hand, if thou art faithful. By the weight of thy deeds shall this reward be weighed."

THE palace of Count Menas, the Greek, was within sight of the church. As we passed the guards in red livery, we heard the bells of the church sounding below us. For the palace was on the summit of a hill, overlooking the hovels of Galata and the sea. I listened to the voice of the surf as we passed through the courtyard, where slaves loitered by empty litters and restless horses. By the time we made our way into an outer hall of columns—each the likeness of a woman in marble—Arbogastes had painted himself the victor over fifty lawless soldiers, and sworn by the Greek gods and the breath of Ali that he had slain six, and I two. Some of the nobles who waited in the hall smiled, but no one laughed at the Persian, and I thought that he was a favorite of the Domastikos.

From the hall we entered a corridor with an arched roof, where Arbogastes' leather boots rang heavily. Here he motioned me to silence, and we bowed the head to several noblemen who were talking together in low voices, glancing impatiently at bare cedar doors at the far end.

But the Persian bowed his way through the guests, knocked upon the portal four times and nudged me in the ribs when we passed through the cedar doors, between two Tatars who stood with drawn sabers.

*The Arabs called the Greeks Roumis. The French and English and Western Europeans were Franks, and all Christians, Nazarenes.

†*Al-comes*—count, or baron.

"That behind us is the whispering gallery," he breathed in my ear. "An opening runs from the ceiling to the wall near my lord's couch, and ofttimes he amuses himself listening to the talk of those who think themselves alone in the gallery. Remember it."

It was not easy, the path to the Lord Menas. We climbed a winding stair, and at each turn there was a lamp in a recess, and in the darkness behind the lamp a curtain that moved and fell again when we had passed.

"Archers," Arbogastes whispered again. "Look at the carpet."

The carpet was leather, from which fresh blood might be wiped in a moment. At the head of the stair a Greek eunuch met us and stared insolently at me. From chin to toe he wore a plain red robe, and the square cap on his shaven head was cloth of gold.

With his staff he led us out upon a gallery where the floor was veined marble, and a fountain cast rose-scent into the air. Beyond the fountain was a dais, and here on a couch lay the Lord Menas.

"What word, O bladder of a mule?" he asked of Arbogastes softly.

He was a young man, beautiful indeed. The veins showed blue on his skin, his eyes were clear and bright. His yellow hair curled about his neck in oiled locks and there was henna-red upon his cheeks. His lips curved wilfully, like a spoiled woman's. A single sapphire of great size gleamed on his bare throat and his crimson tunic was edged with ermine.

"The bird is in the cage, your Magnificence. And in the city—"

"I know the city. Why did you leave the garden before dark?"

"At the gate I was set upon by some rogues." Arbogastes had wit enough to dispense with needless lies when the Domastikos listened. "This Arab lord helped me put them to flight. He is a notable swordsman, though a Muslimin."

Menas spoke Arabic as well as Arbogastes, and now he looked at me suddenly.

"What seek ye of me, O son of the black tents?"

"*Wai,* my Lord, it is no time for the Muslimin to go alone in the streets. I seek protection."

"How many men hast thou, O Khalil?"

"I have one sword, my Lord."

"Wilt use it on my behalf?"

"At need."

"For what price?"

"For no price. Naught have I to sell or buy."

Hereupon he looked upon the fountain for a moment, pinching the skin of his cheek between two fingers.

"It needs no soothsayer, my Badawán, to tell that thou hast a need. All men have needs—some slack purses, some desires. What is thine?"

"A horse, my lord," I made answer truthfully. "Aye, a wonder of a horse."

And I told him of the gray courser, in the hands of the barbarian girl. The young exquisite deigned to smile.

"By the good saints Sergius and Bacchus, this Arab covets the colt, not the filly. Why not go with Arbogastes and take it?"

"Whither? The gates are closed."

"True." He still smiled, as though contemplating something that pleased him. "And, after all, a *saracin* might not easily presume to ride off with the horse in the patriarch's garden. What then?"

I made bold to tell him of my plan.

"When thy men make away with the barbarian girl, then I will bridle and lead out the gray courser, as if bearing him to thee."

"And so, must I lose a racer worth a few hundred denarii in the Hippodrome?"

Now when a youth has his heart set upon a woman, and at the same time dreams of making himself an emperor, he is not apt to haggle at a horse. I had seen that which I had seen—the bearded Maga Ducas, or Lord of Ships, stalking impatiently in the anteroom. Aye, and the captain of the yellow-haired barbarian mercenaries, as well.

Truly this youth held a high place in the Greek court, if he dared to keep such men of war gnawing their beards in his hall. And he had ambition, or they would not have waited upon him.

So I weighed my words accordingly, knowing well that unless I bargained with him, his men-at-arms would take the gray horse for him or for themselves. Such Greeks and barbarians had no true love of a fine horse, yet they would have sold him for a price.

"I have a white charger from the stable of the emperor himself, my Lord," I ventured, "and this royal beast I shall give to the hand of thy captain, when I take the gray racer."

He looked at me sharply, considering the advantages of Murtzuple's charger, and nodded.

"Agreed," he said in Greek.

Thus he spoke with the desire to test me, but the thought came to me not to reveal my knowledge of the Greek, that I had from the galley slaves of the Gates.

"This Arab," spoke up Arbogastes, "understandeth not the noble language of your Mightiness."

"Be it agreed, O Khalil," the Lord Menas said again in my speech, and I bent my head.

"Between us it is agreed, my Lord," I reminded him, "yet forget not that I have agreed to stand at thy back and draw my sword in defense of thy person—that only, and not to be thy servant, at command, as is this Persian."

"Body of Bacchus, thou art a man of many conditions and few promises. A true rarity, I vow, in Constantinople—"

There was a sudden commotion of running feet near at hand, yet unseen, a long shout and a clamor of voices. Menas listened, but his soft voice went on:

"And so thy boldness is forgiven thee. Abide with Arbogastes and await my further word."

He had been toying with a silver ball, and now he let it drop into a bronze basin that hung beside the couch. At once a boy slave slipped from the shadows behind the couch, and another from beyond the fountain. They ran to the heavy velvet curtain that hid one side of the chamber, and drew it back. There was no wall. We looked out upon a tiled balcony overhanging an arm of the sea.

IT WAS the hour of sunset, and a red pathway lay upon the sea—a pathway that led from the city to the tiny sails of many ships coming out of the west.

"The Franks!" cried Arbogastes.

"It is the Venetian fleet," assented my Lord Menas, picking up his silver ball. Suddenly he laughed. "A fleet of gallant fools."

Again the half smile curved his lips, and he touched the glowing sapphire, speaking in Greek to the red eunuch.

"They spent their wealth on followers and accouterments; they reached Venice with empty purses and bold words. They had pledged eighty-five thousand marks of silver to the Doge for his fleet, and war galleys to clear the seas and provisions for a year—to take them to Palestine. Lacking the half of this sum, they pawned their lives for the remainder—or would have done so, had not the Doge persuaded them to capture Zara for the Venetians instead.

"So the palladins, the men of iron, stormed Zara, and gave its spoil to the accursed Venetian merchants. Then came to them an upstart—Alexius—who claimed the throne of Constantinople, and these mummers turned aside again to play the part of rescuers, forsooth. They have come to conquer the Greek empire for Alexius, so to pay their passage to the Holy Land. They would be masters of the city of the Cæsars, and enlist here a mighty host to set free the city of Christ from Moslem bondage! Fools, to go against Constantinople the Great, that never has been taken by mortal man. Aye, their lives are in pawn!"

In high good humor was my Lord Menas, and the eunuch vanished with his staff. Arbogastes plucked at my robe, signing that we should go from the presence of the Domastikos. So, with a salutation we went, unattended.

And at the first turning of the stair I heard a shuffling of feet and whispers in the recess behind the lamp. I feared an arrow and so turned to peer into the gloom that was a passage and not an alcove as Arbogastes had said. Verily, this was a house of many surprizes, and of hidden things.

I saw the eunuch, two spears' lengths down the passage, and behind him another man. This was a warrior, wide of shoulder and dark of face, in mail from toe to helmet—his surcoat so stiff with dust and streaked with rain that the device was dim.

Yet I had seen that device before. The man was a Frank and a captain of warriors. I had faced him once when the Franks pillaged a village near Edessa. They had taken horses and cattle from the village, and had slain else all living things, the women, and the sick, and sucking babes.

There had been no Arab warriors at that village, nor any battle. The Franks who plundered it were filled with the lust to slay. Yet I have seen others who nursed wounded Arabs—

The Frankish baron who burned that village had been Richard de Brienne. And the captain of his men-at-arms was this same

mailed swordsman, who waited behind the eunuch until we should have passed.

So much I saw in a glance, before the eunuch stretched out his long sleeve and the Frank bent his head to hide his face.

"What is it?" asked Arbogastes impatiently.

"A slave in a red robe," I made answer.

But memory had stirred in me. It was this slayer, the Sieur de Brienne who had bestowed the gray horse on the girl Irene. But why had his captain come with hidden face to the house of the Lord Menas?

THAT night I slept in the barrack of the Tatar archers, and in the palace grounds the next day there was not sign or portent of the Frank. I asked Arbogastes if an embassy had come to the city from the barons of Frankistan, and he laughed.

"Oho, they will come with their ships to the sea wall, not before."

He told me also that the Greek prince, Alexius, with the fleet had truly a just claim to the throne, because the father of this prince lay blinded and in chains in the prisons of Murtzuple. The father had been emperor for two years, and before his time poison and the knife had shrouded three Greek emperors. As to whether Murtzuple or Alexius had the best claim to the throne Arbogastes neither knew nor cared. Nor did the Tatars or the Northmen or the Genoese mercenaries care.

"My Lord Menas hath bought the captain of the Northmen and the Lord of Ships," he added. "He hath rolled out casks of Chian wines, and whole sheep roast in the courtyards. We fare well and by that same token there is work laid up for us."

So thought the warriors who crowded around the wine-casks. Some, when their tongues were loosed, said my Lord Menas wished to gather a great array so that when the Franks were driven off he could say that it was his doing. But others—and these were the Genoese who sipped their wine instead of gulping it—whispered that the Domastikos meant to overthrow the emperor suddenly and then seize the crown.

The barbarians from the north of Frankistan said nothing at all, though they drank more than any—dipping their horns into the kegs of mead. They grunted together and sang without mirth—tall men in rusted chain mail who walked with pride, and yet drowsily.

They had been paid to fight for Menas. They were faithful to the gold that bought them.

I wondered what had driven them from their country to serve a Greek. The Tatars yearned for spoil, and the Genoese hated the Venetians. Like dog and wolf was the feud between these twain.

But no man knew the mind of my Lord Menas.

The following night it was that I heard the voice of the Frank, who was the follower of Richard de Brienne. It was late, and the singing of the Northmen had waked me from sleep. The feel of before-dawn was in the air, and I rose, to walk through the corridors. I meant to go to the balcony from which we had seen the ships.

I wished to see what the galleys of the Franks were about, because they had withdrawn from sight the night before now. And I went warily through the long corridors and up the marble stairs where drowsy slaves stood beside the oil lamps. The armed sentries of my Lord Menas were not to be seen, yet I had heard the corridors were guarded.

Before long I had lost the way, and entered a dark chamber. Here I ceased to go forward and paused to listen. Close to my ear a man's voice spoke and another answered clearly.

One was the voice of my Lord Menas, the other the strange Frank—hoarse and growling with much argument and wine. They seemed to be in agreement, though their words I understood not.

The chamber was empty, and the voices echoed in its stone walls. I heard another sound and leaped to one side.

Near at hand the air moved, and feet thumped on the hard mosaics. In the light from the passage behind me, I beheld the figure of a man and the gleam of a knife that struck at me, the blade ripping through my cloak. The man groaned loud, and fell. In the same instant that he stabbed, my sword cut him under the ribs and grated against the spine.

Like a slit water-skin he tumbled down and ceased to move. I drew back from the blood on the floor and looked at the wall. Aye, there was a niche, as if made for a statue, and beside it a square of fretwork, bronze by the feel of it. My fingers passed

through it, and felt the breath of cool air.

This was surely a whispering chamber, and at the other end—what? The opening in the wall ran perhaps to the sleeping-place of the Domastikos. By chance, hearing the voices, I had stood before it, and the guardian of the chamber—he may well have been a deaf mute—had sprung out at me from the niche.

Then it was that I had assurance of the truth of this. A wide portal in the mosaic chamber flung open, light streamed in, and two Greek spearmen stood beside me. Two black savages entered, bearing torches, and behind them came my Lord Menas with mincing gait.

Verily, from the other end of the gallery, he had heard the leap and the groan of his slave, and now he glanced at me from under lowered lids.

"Thy blade is bloodied, O Khalil," he said softly. "Wipe it, and sheath it."

The spears of the Greek warriors were close to me, yet I delayed not to wipe clean the *chimitar* on the tunic edge of the dead slave, and sheath it, and uprise with folded arms.

"And now, Khalil—what is this?"

"Upon thee, my Lord, greeting of the dawn! I sought my way to the balcony, for sight of the ships. At this spot the slave leaped and struck with his knife—here—" I lifted my cloak. "No word passed, nor could I see him. So I slew him, and will take therefor no blame."

The Domastikos glanced at the grating, and at my bare feet—for it is our custom to remove our slippers at the entrance of a dwelling. Holding a linen, musk-scented, to his nostrils, he bent over the dead man.

"A good blow, Khalil. I see thou art a man of the sword."

I had slain his guard by the whispering gallery, and it would have availed me not to plead that I had not overheard the words that passed at the other end. Nor could I read the eyes of the Greek, though I watched for him to make a sign to his spearmen.

"Eh, Khalil, the fault lies not with thee!" And he smiled.

Aye, he smiled, and his nostrils quivered just a little when he withdrew the cloth. And still he showed no anger.

The eyes of a leopard glow, and its muscles twitch—even to the tail—when it settles itself to leap. A mask was upon the face and eyes of the Greek lord, and I was assured that he had not pardoned me, and would exact my life—not for the death of the slave, but because I ahd chanced into the listening gallery when he held speech with the Frank.

With his men or his treasure I might have made free, and have been pardoned. But not with his secret—not at this hour. I think he had wished to order the spearmen to advance upon me, and had decided otherwise. A sword well handled is a match for two long spears, and Menas was neither impatient nor a fool.

"My lord," I made response, when he waited, "may God requite thee for thy mercy. It is true that I have meant no harm to thy men, being ignorant of the customs of this, thy palace."

"Thou art, as Arbogastes maintained, a bold man," he said idly, gathering his cloak about him. "I have a mind to such. Go then, and await my command."

WHO may alter what is ordained? Who may look upon the Writing that is not to be altered? I had not plotted against the Domastikos, yet he sought my life, as surely as a trodden snake strikes. And this was because his palace was a pit of traps and a breeding place of suspicion. Within it I might no longer dwell, and I walked forth before he could send an order to the guards at the outer gates concerning me.

In all Constantinople there was no sanctuary for me, save one.

And so it came to pass that when Arbogastes sought his post of duty that morn—tardily, because he had been at his wine in the past night—he found me sitting on the bank of the canal, by the bridge that led to the house of the barbarian girl.

He glittered and shone, indeed, like a peacock. From somewhere he had got himself a bronze breastplate with eagles upon it, and he was busily counting different coins from his right hand to his left.

Then he counted them back again and shook his thick head.

"By all the devils, one hand tallies not with the other! And by the beard of Ali, this ducat hath been shaved of half its gold." He blinked and glared from reddened eyes. "The dog cheated me!"

He said he had been throwing dice at the tavern near by, and regretted leaving it,

being muddled in his head about his gains and losses.

"Eh, Arbogastes," I said to him, "I had thought thee an *al-comes*, in this new armor. Verily, thou hast the figure of a swordsman."

He ceased his counting to simper, and swell his chest. Indeed he had the figure of a fighter if naught else.

"And the dog cheated thee?" I went on.

"Y'Allah, he did! My dice were clipped and loaded. I won two casts in three, and he robbed me of my gains, the son of a bath tender!"

"That is evil. Nay, then, I shall keep thy post, and thou shalt return to the Greek and gain back thy winnings. Only come at dusk to take my place."

Arbogastes felt of his lean purse, and blinked. He had upon him the thirst that is bred of spirits, not wine alone, and saw no reason why I should not watch in his stead. No men of Menas' household would enter the garden of the patriarch.

"Be wary as to the wench," he grunted. "I go!"

"Then say naught in the tavern of my watch in this place, or ill may befall thee, Arbogastes."

He nodded—he could see that.

So throughout the morning and until the sun began to sink past the dome of the church, I sat, sleeping a little, but rousing when the monks or the slaves of Irene came near the bridge. The girl I did not see, but the gray horse was led out and fed, and I knew that she was within.

Then came Arbogastes, with lurching step and darkened face.

"Ho, brother," he cried, "the gates of plunder are open! Harken to the bells! Come, and let us take what we may."

His purple cloak was gone, and his wallet likewise. In truth Arbogastes looked more like a wight plundered than a plunderer.

"Eh, what has happened?" I asked.

"The Franks have happened—may they taste of Eblis! So the tale runs in the bazaar. They drifted across from the Scutari shore this morning, with their horses in the palanders and the men-at-arms in the barges, all of them lashed to the oared galleys. They sounded trumpet and horn and made a landing near Galata, leaping into shallow water with their spears on their wrists, and leading forth their chargers from the great ships. The fools have taken Galata and set up a camp on the mainland."

"And what of the Greeks?"

Arbogastes curled his beard, which reeked more of musk than ever. The wine in his veins was singing a song, and he looked on the bare garden as if it were paradise.

"Murtzuple is a wolf, and a wolf, O my brother, is not easily penned. He hath drawn back his hosts, behind the city wall. The Franks will break their spears on the wall, and when that has happened they will taste grief because they are separated from their ships and their brothers, the Venetians. Come, Khalil, this will be a night of nights!"

The wine in him did not bind his tongue; it was not fitting to leave him thus in a place of prayer. And it did not suit me to forsake the garden then.

"Where lie the men of the Domastikos?"

"Allah, am I an oracle that I should know?" The Persian scowled and yawned. "I think they will muster in the *registan* of Tiodore* at dawn."

"Then go thou and sleep. I shall keep thy ward."

"Nay, I must fare to the palace of the Domashitish—" he hiccoughed, and blinked owlishly— "of the Domtishok, our master. 'Tis the hour for my waiting upon him with word of the Frankish wench."

"If that thou doest," I said, "thou wilt be slain and the skin taken from thy body and stuffed with straw and hung out upon the sea-wall." I had seen such bodies, blown hither and yon by the wind, and torn by crows' beaks.

"Nay, why should my lord do that to me?"

Now I had no wish to tell the stupid Persian what had befallen me in the palace.

"Why did he choose thee in the beginning, instead of one of his servants? Why did he show favor to a bullock like thee? Because when thy task is done, and the girl is taken to him, he can then slit thy throat—lest any of the Nazarene priests remember having seen thee sitting at her gate."

There was much truth in this, but Arbogastes saw it not.

"No buffalo am I!" he growled. "I am a swordsman, a *bahator*."

"Do you wish to be skin

"Nay—"

"Then go and sleep. But first tell me the password."

*The forum of Theodosius.

Arbogastes seemed not to hear, and he began to snore on his feet. I shook his shoulder.

"The word—what is the password of the Greeks?"

The wine and the drowsiness were heavy upon him and he only grunted until suddenly he found words.

"Another cup!"

Eh, there was little good in seeking the word of him. He staggered away up the path, and I sat down to think. The ache of hunger was in me, but I could not go to the Nazarene church and beg for food like a slave.

It was then, a little after dusk, when all the monks had gone into the church, whither they were summoned by a great bell, that the barbarian girl Irene came and sat down by me.

BETWEEN her hands she had brought dates and a pomegranate and barley cakes, and when I had twice refused them, she leaned closer to look into my eyes.

"I have given Khutb, the gray courser, to eat, and why not thee, O Badawán?"

So I began to eat slowly, and she leaned chin on hands to watch the gleam of the new moon behind the barrier of cypresses, and listen to the *clong-clang* of the bell.

"The Greeks yonder," she said after a while, "pray for the overthrow of the Franks. But the Franks will take the city and then there will be a new emperor."

I thought of Menas, who had talked with a captain of the iron men.

"There be fifteen thousand Franks and some few Venetians without—there be two hundred thousand Greeks and mercenaries within these walls."

"Are they one at heart? What happened today?"

I told her and she became thoughtful. Twice a hundred thousand men behind such walls are not easily overcome, and it was ever the fault of the iron men to venture onward foolishly.

"My father was castellan of Edessa," she said. "More than one onset and onfray have I seen. I do not think these treacherous Greeks will stand before the lances of the Crosses on open ground. I would well to be upon the walls—"

Perhaps she was lonely, perhaps excited by hope of the morrow, because she told me how she longed for the coming of the Crosses. The Lord Richard de Brienne had joined the iron men, she had heard, and she was to become his wife.

This palladin of the Franks had tarried once at Edessa—for her father kept open hall and was well content with company and song of minstrel. At that time Irene had been no more than a stripling, eager to follow the hawk, and to ride forth with her father, who was one of the wisest of the Franks.

The Lord Richard had looked twice upon her and had asked her for his wife, and the father of Irene had said that a year must pass before she was of age for marriage.

So the warrior of the Cross had fared forth, after plighting his word to the damsel, and straightway Irene forgot dogs and hawks and the loves of childhood for love of him; and she had waited more than the year—for her father was slain, and his followers and servants and his feudal hall were lost to her. For that is the law of Frankistan.

Aye, four years passed, and she heard of the deeds of her lord in Syria and Jerusalem, yet saw him not. Edessa had fallen to my people and the Nazarene priests had sent her to the protection of the patriarch of Constantinople. She had brought with her the gray horse, Khutb, the betrothal gift of the Lord Richard.

All this was clear, not by her words alone, but by her voice and the eagerness in her. In this barbarian girl there was no deceit.

"How is he to be known, this Richard," I asked.

"He is prouder than other men, and his eyes shine when he speaks. His hair is black and his skin is dark, and he is taller, even, than thee, O Khalil."

How was I to learn aught from this? It seemed to her that Richard of Brienne was verily a saint in chain mail, guileless as a boy, grave and courteous to all who met with him. His blue eyes were without fear—

"What device bears he on his shield?"

"No device, save a red cross. If ye seek him, O Badawán—" she tossed her head valiantly—"look for him in the heart of the onset. Wilt thou draw sword against him, for the gray horse?"

"It may have been written," I said, and upon the words I heard a scraping near at hand, as of a scabbard tip or spear butt.

In another moment I felt assured that a man was breathing heavily within an arrow's flight.

Darkness had fallen, and the gleam of moon and stars revealed little under the trees. I touched the girl Irene upon the shoulder and whispered to her.

"Go thou into the house. There is danger."

She made no sound of fright, but rose swiftly and ran lightly over the bridge, into the stone dwelling. By then I felt that there were more than three who crept up on me. Eh, they were heavy men and the wood was dark. But they could see me, at the edge of the canal.

I rose and ran to the narrow bridge, and turned upon it, *chimitar* in hand, as five figures burst from the path and ran toward me. The leader wore a Greek helmet, and held an officer's short sword. The others carried spears—I could see no bows.

"Ha, Khalil!" cried the swordsman. "Whither went the maid?"

Now I had turned upon them because it is better to stand than to flee. I knew the speaker for a captain of my Lord Menas, and whether he came for me or for the barbarian girl there was no knowing. Perhaps they had come in this fashion, like panthers, to escape the eyes of the patriarch's folk in the church.

So I thought twice, and thrice. The girl Irene was not of my seeking, and yet—she was brave, and alone. Her fate was ordained—it were folly to take her part, and yet in standing by there was shame.

Then the captain spoke.

"No harm will befall thee, O Khalil!"

He spoke too readily. Why should he have pledged this thing unasked?

"What do ye here?" I asked in his speech.

"We have come for the barbarian."

Again, he was too eager. What reward had my Lord Menas placed upon my life?

"The maid is in my keeping," I answered, thinking of many things.

Upon the words a spear flashed from the hand of a Greek, and gleamed before my eyes. I leaped back, falling heavily, and the weapon struck into earth behind me. To the eyes and ears of the Greeks it seemed that I had been pierced, and they came forward with the low shout of men who have made their kill.

Eh, it is well said among my people, "When ye set fire to the thicket, be wise and watch out for the tiger." The Greek captain had swung up his short sword when I rose to one knee. My *chimitar* was in hand and I slashed him deep over the thighs.

It was a good blow, touching no bones, and his sword fell upon my shoulder, his helmet to one side the bridge, his body to the other. His men cried out in rage and astonishment. From the shadows of the house wall I spoke to them sternly:

"Pick up thy leader and bear him hence! Would thy Lord Menas wish to leave his officer in the garden of the patriarch—thus?"

It was as a bone cast to dogs, and they snarled and muttered, half fearing. Through the open gate in the wall I ran, and into the stone house, where no light shone.

And the girl Irene cried out my name—"Khalil!" Something, no doubt she had seen upon the bridge. "Whose followers be these?"

"Death's servants. Aye, bringing slavery for thee, and for me the shroud that is never to be cast off."

Swiftly I told her of the desire of my Lord Menas and the watch that had been kept upon her.

"I know!" she cried impatiently. "There were spies—a Persian who watched. Yet the Domastikos would never dare carry a maid from the patriarch's garden—"

"Ha—these Greeks dare not go back to their lord without thee."

For this must have been the party sent to bear her to Menas. They had looked for Arbogastes and, finding him not, had ventured within the garden. Then, hearing my voice and knowing me, they had sought to slay me first.

Only one path was open to us. The house was in a corner of the high wall. To climb such a wall with armed men baying at heel were folly—if there were not others without. To abide in the house were witless. Plainly it was written that I should be as a shield to this maid. Had she not been thrust into my keeping? Surely we had shared the salt, though she thought little of that.

My safety lay in mounting at once the gray horse Khutb and springing out upon them. And if I did this, leaving the maid to the mercies of the angered Greeks, I must taste everlasting shame.

I closed the house door and barred it. Taking the girl's hand in mine, I ran into the rear enclosure where Khutb was stabled. At once the slender courser trotted toward

us, snuffling and making great play of biting and springing away.

"*Taghûn—taghûn!*" I cried at him. "Be at peace; there will be work enough for thee!"

Bridling him, I forced the ring-bit between his teeth, listening the while to the Greeks pounding on the house door. The hag and the peasant had roused, and I bade them pull down the bars of the stable yard and then seek safety over the wall—little it availed them, I fear. There was not time for the saddle.

A Greek ran into the yard as I lifted the maiden to the back of Khutb.

"Hold to my girdle and lower thy head!" So I sprang up, speaking to the gray horse and drawing tight the rein.

Eh, he was a horse among many. Like an arrow from its string he darted through the gate in the fence, the Greek leaping aside. My erstwhile charger, the pot-bellied, cow-hoofed white stallion would have taken an arrow's flight to plunge to full career. There was still a harder feat in store for Khutb.

The spearmen were standing about the bridge and door, so I reined aside, and put Khutb at the canal. Ha, that was a sight and a delight! He pricked his ears, shortened his stride, without swerve or check, and rose into the air—I gripping with knees and hand in his mane, for the girl, off-balance, clung heavily.

Khutb landed daintily, with not a hand's breadth to spare. And then, once more, I urged him to trot and gallop, sweeping along the deserted path that led to the garden gate.

A shout went up behind us, but the gate was far, and we had passed through before the Greeks stationed there could see our faces in that dim light.

And so we rode forth into the alleys of Constantinople.

TO THE *khan* of the Bokharians, where lay my rug and horse—the big white charger—I took my way, finding the inn deserted, or nearly so. The Muslimin had fled the city and the Armenian linen workers, and the Syrian bath-men who frequented the *khan*, were out thieving and defending their thefts. It was also dark. I placed Irene in my compartment over the stable court and bade her sleep.

To the dog of a Bokharian who had leered at our incoming I gave a piece of gold and a warning to hold his tongue, and then I groomed Khutb and fed him a little barley. Then I rubbed down the white charger without haste, and bridled him and waited for the coming of a man to serve me in the thing I planned to do.

"Y'Allah! O madman—O miscreant!"

So cried Arbogastes when he ran into the courtyard seeking me, no longer drowsy but red with fear and haste.

"What has come upon thee, my brother?" I saluted him.

"Misfortune—calamity. Such calamity. And thou — breeder of woe—hatcher of evil — thou hast heaped all this upon my head!"

In truth he lacked his plumed helmet, and his hair was disordered. In a breath he told me what had befallen him. The Greek who kept the tavern where he had lain in sleep, this dog of a Greek doubtless fearing the anger of the Domastikos, had wakened him and sent him forth, when Menas' men came seeking through the bazaar quarters. Arbogastes fled, not knowing what had happened—only hearing the curses heaped upon his name and mine by the searchers.

"It was thy doing, Khalil," he howled. "Thou didst beguile me and send me from the garden, and steal away the —— girl from my lord, and the horse as well. It was all thy doing!"

"By the eyes of ——, I did not plan it. It was to keep life in me I fled, on this horse."

What need to swear to truth? Arbogastes merely raged the more and mustered courage to threaten.

"No more tricks, Khalil! Did I not befriend thee, and earn thee honor with Menas? A fox is not more deceitful than thee. Now am I dead and by torture, unless—give me the girl!"

I rubbed down the stallion's flank with clean straw, and thought for a moment, Arbogastes waxing bolder and fingering the sword he never meant to draw.

"How many are searching for us?" I asked.

"All! Every warrior, and slave of the palace. Ten thousand. My Lord Menas rides from street to street casting about for the wench, and all the blood hath left his face—nay, there is enough spilled under his sword this night. His torches are in every corner. They will be in this quarter of the merchants in an hour."

Verily, the Greek is a man of strange moods. That Menas should forget the siege and the throne to cast about for a masterless maid! Yet he had not altogether forgotten.

"And in an hour thou shalt taste of his tortures, Arbogastes. Had I not been in the garden at twilight instead of thee, ere now they had shrouded thee."

The Persian wiped his thick lips and ceased to threaten.

"What road is open to us?"

"O brother," I made response, "the way is dark for me, but thou art a swordsman, a man of courage and a favorite to boot. There is a way for thee to life and reward."

"How?" he asked, suspicious and fearful at once.

"Canst find Menas?"

He shivered, saying that of all things that were the easiest done, the hardest to avoid. Upon this I summoned the Bokharian who had been trying to hear what we said, and bade him bring reed pen and ink and the cleanest parchment he had.

And upon this parchment, while that precious twain stared and wondered, I wrote as follows:

To the high and merciful Lord Menas, the Chamberlain, greeting—I, Khalil, the Badawán, have fulfilled my pledge to thee, and in token I send thee the horse that was promised. I have the gray racer, and may God be the judge of thy promise to me!

"What says the writing?" Arbogastes scowled at the Arabic characters. I told him, and bade him take the charger to his master and earn reward.

"He will demand tidings of the Frankish maid—and thee."

"Tell him, then, the truth. Thou hast seen me here, and the girl is in my cubby above. This *khan-samah* hath seen her."

Taking the scroll, Arbogastes rolled it up and thrust it into his belt; then he grasped the rein of the imperial charger, and stood first on one foot, then on the other. His beard bristled in a grin.

"Look here, Khalil—surely thou wilt not tarry here, to be cut open like a cornered hare! Tell me where thou hast a mind to hide, and I swear to thee by my honor and the graves of the Companions that I will lead Menas away, to seek thee in another quarter. Arbogastes can be like a fox in wiles."

He tried to look shrewd and honest at the same time, which is no easy matter.

"Since thou hast asked," I made answer, "tell him to search for her, an he will, at the church of the Greek patriarch."

Arbogastes grimaced and looked twice at me. In such an hour as this my Lord Menas might send his men into the garden of the Nazarenes, but to force his way into the church itself would be sacrilege and would arouse against him the flame of fanaticism.

No sooner had the Persian swaggered off than I beckoned toward the Bokharian who had been slinking about the courtyard like a wolf around a sheepfold. Him I ordered to hide away the gray horse Khutb, even as he knew me to be a man of my word. If the horse were found by the Greeks, he would live to regret it at my hand—if the horse were well hidden, he should have from me a pound of gold.

We could no longer keep Khutb at our hand, and the departure of the splendid steed saddened me.

To Irene I explained that Menas' searchers were between us and the church—if not on guard at the church itself—and so that way was closed to us. From my garments I selected the cloth-of-silver robe of honor that the emperor had bestowed on me, also a loose cloak and a small cap of Greek cut. This I bade her put on. No maiden of such beauty would be safe in the streets of Constantinople on the morrow; nor could she hope to hide longer from Menas' spies in woman's dress.

Though loose, the garment did not look awry on her, for we were both of slender build. The flood of her yellow hair was hidden by cap and cloak, and so—the Bokharian being out of the way—no one saw me venture forth, preceded by a handsome youth in nobleman's attire.

"Where can we go?" the maid asked me, as she tried to match her step to my stride.

"Whither God opens a way," I said, and there was indeed no other course but that.

SO IT came to pass that we beheld something that was near a miracle. After dawn we found ourselves near the line of the great city wall, whither companies of men-at-arms were hurrying. No heed was given us, and we passed up one of the tower stairs with a throng of Tatar archers.

The assault of the city had begun.

Before us lay the blue circle of the sublime port, and the galleys and palanders and

small craft of the Venetians. Far off to the left we could see the camp of the Franks, and the line of their mangonels and batterers. And we looked for a long time.

See, the city of Constantinople runs down into a point, far into the sea. It is like a triangle of three equal sides—the base upon the hills, and the apex the gilded roofs of the imperial palace.

Against this tip of the triangle the waters of the two seas beat sonorously. On the side of the triangle where we stood was the port, with its canals and landing stairs and long wall that was higher than the deck of a ship. At intervals great towers rose from the wall, and on these towers were stone casters and smaller machines that shot forth balls of naphtha fire and sheafs of flaming arrows.

They were firing upon the small ships of the Venetians, which were answering with arrows that did little harm. I saw a heavy stone crash through the deck of a barge laden with men, and break it in twain like a single stick.

It was as Arbogastes had said—the Franks were beating in vain against the wall of the city. A brisk wind off the sea was driving the mists away, and we saw masses of Greek soldiery moving up the steep streets, going away toward the land gates. Other companies mustered in reserve in the *registans*. And all the housetops and palace balconies overlooking the sea-wall were crowded with watchers, slave and noble—harlot and Greek princess, laughing and pointing.

Above all the city towered the single statue that can be seen from far out toward Asia, the gigantic white woman with the countenance of the dead.*

Aye, Constantinople was like that stone woman, mighty and unchanging, looking out upon the world with the dead eyes of an ancient thing—

"They give way!" Irene cried. "They wear the Cross and they give way!"

In truth, the smaller vessels of the Venetians were drawing off, disheartened. Nay, there was reason for it!

Was ever such a siege as this? The Franks were so few that they beset only a little part of the great walls, and for every warrior of the Franks, ten men leaned on their weapons within the wall and laughed.

The girl, her hands clasped and her eyes moody, had no thought of hunger or peril, or the passing of the hours. Her gaze was fixed on the ships with a great yearning. Somewhere before her was the warrior *Ricard*, on land or sea, perhaps wounded, perhaps slain.

When the sun was high, she clapped her hands and touched my shoulder. There was movement among the war galleys of the Venetians. The oar banks rose and fell, and the long vessels pointed their noses toward the sea-wall of the city.

The wind had died down, and the swell lapped gently against the stone jetties and foundations. The broad banners and long pennons of the galleys swelled and flapped, and soon we heard the roar of their drums and the shrill cry of their *nacars*.

"See," she cried, "this is the real onset!"

It was a goodly sight—the shining vessels crowded with men in armor. The largest galley came with a rush toward the wall near our tower, and turned, weighing oars. It drifted up against the wall, the oars on that side being pushed far back toward the stern. Soon they began to splinter, and the side of the galley rose and sank within a javelin's length of the battlement—too near for the mangonels to cast stones upon it.

But the Greeks became very active, thrusting out beams—to topple upon the crowded deck, and loosing flights of arrows. The shields lashed upon the rail of the ship gave some protection and every rower had a small shield bound on his arm. And the fore- and after-castles and the great raised deck amidship were on a level with the battlement.

And the little platforms on the tall masts overtopped the wall, so that the Venetian crossbowmen were able to send their shafts into the men on the wall.

For a time there was tumult, of breaking timbers and war shouts, and thunder of drums. A score of galleys had drawn up in line with their leader, and from the masts of others came arrow flights that clattered against our tower.

But to these shafts Irene gave no thought. She was leaning forward to watch the platforms that were thrust out from the high bow of the ship. Venetians surged across these platforms and leaped at the parapet, and we heard the clatter of sword and shield fighting.

Thus for a moment the issue of the

*This must have been the colossal statue of Juno.

assault was in the balance. And in that moment I heard a voice that grated upon my ears. A shout swelled up from the well of the tower stairs, and it was an officer of my Lord Menas who had cried the order, a Greek who had seen me more than once in the palace of the Domastikos.

I rose and put hand to scabbard. I looked toward the palace of Menas, and, as God ordained it, I beheld him afar in the open gallery, at ease upon his couch, his officers about him. Aye, even the red eunuch with his bloodless lips, his arms crossed upon his breast.

But they were looking at the ships, and the struggle on the wall. Again the officer shouted from below, and the Tatars who had been plying their bows, stepped back and exchanged glances.

They were savage folk, clad in the hides of beasts, yet they were rare archers and had slain many with their shafts. Their leader spoke to them, and they loosed their bowstrings and thrust their bows into the leather cases at their girdles.

"God gives!" they said, one to another.

And they thronged down the stair. A trumpet sounded and other armed companies of the Domastikos began to run down from the wall, marching off into the alleys somewhither.

"What is this?" I asked the Genoese officer who had been trying to train the naphtha thrower upon the great ship.

He was staring, wide-eyed, with snarling lips. All at once he laughed down in his throat and shook clenched fists up at the palace where Menas was no longer to be seen.

"May he be eaten by dogs! May his soul shrivel in purgatory! *Aur—aur!* It is treachery!"

And he, too, ran down the stair, shouting that they had been betrayed by the Greeks.

"Look!" whispered Irene.

With half the men running from this stretch of wall, the Venetians were gaining the upper hand. An old *shaikh* led them now, beckoning with a long straight sword, bareheaded. His hair was white, and his long black cloak whipped about his lean body. I have heard it said that this *shaikh* was the chieftain of all the Venetian warriors, by name Dandalo, the Doge.

Once they gave way, the Greeks broke and fled, and a new banner was hoisted on the nearest tower—a gold banner with the semblance of a lion. As far as we could see along the wall the Venetians were swarming and shouting.

Eh, it was indeed a miracle, that ships could have carried a city wall. Except Menas had drawn off his men, the matter might have ended otherwise. But it happened as I have said.

And more than this happened. We could see the array of the Franks drawn up along the distant shore, and the glittering host of the Greeks that emerged from the gates to give battle to them. At first I thought that Menas had taken off his men to join this host. Yet the time did not suffice, and it were folly to yield the wall of a city, to sally from the gate.

No man knew what Menas was doing, or why. But the standards of the emperor, Murtzuple, were in the center of the Greek host on the shore.

The mist had cleared away, and the sky was a clear blue. The host of the Greeks was shaped like a horn, with the ends projecting far beyond the line of the Franks. My eyes are good. I saw the archers of the Franks advance—they moved, it seemed, like midgets crawling across a giant stage.

This was the moment when the wings of the Greek host should have closed on the flanks of the iron men, and buried them under numbers. But the horsemen of the Greeks were all in the center, and the far-stretched wings waited to watch.

Slowly the knights of the Cross, the iron men, formed in line, mounted, with spears upraised. They meant to charge the Greek center.

Then a trumpet blast sounded from beneath the glittering standards of Murtzuple.

Aye, we heard the blast—we upon the wall. There were many trumpets and all the Venetians were standing in silence at gaze. So were the Greeks on the housetops. Then the Greek host began to move, slowly at first.

It moved back toward the gates, instead of onward toward the Franks. The trumpet call had been a signal to retreat.

What had happened? The All-Wise knows! Perhaps the Greeks, despite their numbers, had lost heart—perhaps Murtzuple and the grandees had seen the Venetians carry the sea-wall and feared for the city. Yet I, Khalil el Khadr, beheld fifty thousand flee before ten thousand, with not an arrow sped, not a sword bared from sheath.

AND now the vulture of misgiving ate at my heart. I had taken under my protection this maiden, clad in the garments of a young grandee. What was to be her fate? I could not leave her, and how could one sword protect her?

For the vials of wrath and fear had broken upon the city. Greek companies—and they of my Lord Menas' command—were hastening tardily to attack the Venetians, who diverted them by setting fire to wooden buildings in the nearest alleys, using the same casting machine and naphtha jars that we had watched. Smoke spread under the sun like a veil of ill-omen.

We were climbing the narrow streets, to escape from the wall. And on every hand was heard wailing of women. From their dark holes the vagabonds of the city rushed out, to tear at rich garments with their claws.

"Treachery!" A Greek captain lashed his horse through the beggars, and shouted, striving to make his way toward the gates on the far side, where was neither fire nor mob. "The emperor hath betrayed us!"

His charger stumbled and staggered, and a ragged man slashed a knife across its tendons. The horse screamed and fell, the officer falling among the beggars, who closed over him silently. As rats swarm over a bit of meat, jerking and tearing, so these foul creatures rent the Greek among them, until his voice was no longer to be heard.

I threw my cloak over Irene and hastened up wooden stairs that led out of the darkness of the alleys. Smoke was thick in the air and others were pushing and thrusting to run past us. So were we borne by the mob, through a throng of Greeks, into a great open space.

And here was half-silence, and the heavy breathing of a multitude, and grating of iron mail and stamping of horses. Armed men were standing in some formation throughout the *registan*. There were restless Tatars and red-robed spearmen, and—in advance of a group of mounted nobles—my Lord Menas.

He bestrode the white charger from the imperial stables, and the horse was caparisoned in purple, like an emperor's mount. The baton held in his left hand and resting on his knee was tipped with a gold crown, and he was speaking to the multitude. The warriors in this place were his. And then I remembered Arbogastes' words, that they were to muster in the forum of Theodosius.

"—It is an hour of danger, good people"—so the voice of Menas proclaimed from afar off—"yet it will pass. Behold, my companies go to drive the Venetians from the wall! Behold, my power is mustered here!"

He stretched out his right hand as if offering a gift.

"The imperial city is unconquerable. The Franks are few and foolhardy. Except for the cowardly flight of your former emperor, Murtzuple, we should have driven the barbarians from the coast. We can still hold the hills—aye, even while I speak, Greek hands are tearing the Lion of Saint Mark from yonder tower."

The listeners who had climbed upon the pedestals of the statues and the balconies of the houses, craned their heads, and shouted, some one thing, some another. The truth was that no one could see through the smoke.

"My Northmen hold the Galata gate!" Menas raised himself in his stirrups, as if his eyes could see all this. "O my people, these barbarians shall never enter the grounds of the thrice-to-be revered patriarch, or set hand upon the holy altar of Saint Sophia. The prince, Alexius, whom they would set over you as lord, is no more than a dupe—your churches, your souls they seek to enslave under the Latin yoke. I have foreseen this."

Shouts arose anew from the grandees clustered behind him. The Lord of Ships had the biggest voice.

"Take arms—follow the Domastikos, who remained to save you when the emperor fled!"

Others began to make outcry:

"Blessing be upon Menas, the savior! Who is mightier than Menas?"

Those who stood behind me began to push and strain to get nearer, and some one cried that Menas should be made emperor. When men are frightened they will follow any one that stands firm, girdled in courage.

"Menas reigns! God and the Emperor Menas!"

The nobles about him began to scatter silver and gold coins into the mob, and the shouting became so great that he could no longer be heard. His warriors tossed their spears, and the people in the balconies wept and threw down flowers.

And yet his words were false, and he alone had betrayed the city, hoping in this hour of calamity to win the throne.

He had withdrawn his men by order from the wall. Surely he had known the fruit of that, because he had been looking forth. Aye, instead of hastening to the side of the emperor, he was buying the mob by coins and words.

The crush about us was so great that I stooped and lifted the girl Irene by the knees, bidding her climb to the pedestal of the statue against which we had been forced. Others were sitting on the marble block, and she stepped up to the figure itself, sitting upon its knee and swinging her feet, smiling down on the Greeks, who cried out applause—believing her some noble's son trying to gain a clear view of the new emperor. Menas himself glanced toward her, but knew her not.

The statue was of gilded stone—a powerful man, unclad, sitting with tense muscles, and frowning. It was a pagan god called Hercules, and it seemed as if he were angry at the fickle Greeks.

And then, as if the ancient gods of the pagans had spoken aloud, the shouting and rejoicing in the *registan* ceased. From one of the streets uprose the roar that has one meaning, and no other. It was a thunder of hoarse voices, a steady clanging of steel and crashing of hoofs upon flagstones.

It was still a long way off, yet it came nearer Out of the maw of this street ran a tall man, with the mail hacked from his bleeding shoulder, helmetless and unarmed. He was a Northman, and the throng made way for him until he could catch the eye of Menas and make his voice heard.

What he shouted I know not, but no messenger of good tidings came ever thus.

He pointed behind him, and Irene stood up, her cheeks flushing red.

"The Franks!" she cried. "Give way, ye Greeks, before the Crosses!"

In that moment my Lord Menas showed himself no leader of warriors. There was need of an instant order, and a clear voice. Yet he turned his head to speak with this noble and that.

When he should have spurred forward his horse, he let fall his rein. And when that moment had passed, the multitude began to make itself heard again.

"The Franks! The city burns!"

Some began to slip away, and blows and cries of pain were heard. By now I could see the iron men.

They were pressing steadily down the street, driving remnants of the northern warriors before them. Their steeds were accoutered in mail, with glistening headpieces. Their long swords flashed up and down, and their faces were hidden behind nasal and vizors.

With shields—battered and stained—before their bodies, and with deep shouts of triumph, they emerged from the street into the square. Some of the Greek spearmen faced about and dressed weapons, looking first one way, then the other.

"*Ekh*, brother," grunted a Tatar at my side, "this hay will be cut by those reapers. There is loot on the other side of the city."

He made off, and others followed, sparing not the mob in their way. In another moment thousands of men were trying to run out of the square and the flame of fear took hold on their souls.

"Wo!" cried a soldier, beating about with his sword. "We are surrounded."

The worst of all fears is that of peril, unseen, at a man's back. The multitude of slaves and common men became a tide, rushing and swirling, seeking its way from the forum. And to escape the clutch of this tide, I leaped to the pedestal of the statue.

Eh, the scum of the city ebbed away from the man they had acclaimed emperor, disappearing down every alley and stair until only the red-cloaked spearmen and the mounted Greeks stood between Menas and the fury of the Franks. The mailed riders plunged into the confused ranks of Menas' followers, as strong men leap through surf, and though they were few, their weight and the terror of their swords opened a way for them. I touched the girl Irene on the knee.

"We can abide no longer. Come!"

But, standing on the thigh of Hercules, she was staring eagerly at the combat, and when I urged again she shook her head angrily. Go she would not.

Nor did I go from the place. Verily it is written that a man's grave is dug in one spot, and in that grave shall he lie at the appointed time. It had come into my mind that I had sworn to my Lord Menas to stand at his back and defend him if his life was assailed.

Though his followers had set upon me, he himself was not proven forsworn. Though

a man flee from peril, he may not rid himself of the stain of a broken oath. I climbed down from the stone and made toward him.

A LITTLE while ago there had been two thousand Greeks about Menas. Between them and twice a hundred Franks, the struggle had been doubtful. Now the French and Flemish archers were coming out on the balconies—from the houses they had entered to loot—and had put aside plundering to send their shafts into the close-packed spearmen.

Nay, they picked out the knights on horses, and emptied saddles swiftly. The Lord of Ships rose high in his stirrup with two arrows through his throat, and the Greeks gave back toward the statue of Hercules. More of the Franks trotted into the forum and charged with their battle shout. I reached the Domastikos and took his rein.

"My Lord," I cried, "there is a way to safety down those stairs. Dismount and take with thee the servants of thy household. Give me fifty chosen men, and I will hold the steps."

His cheeks were bloodless, and his fingers fumbled with the chain at his throat. He was as if stunned by a blow on the head, without voice or will. Then his eyes lifted and gleamed with purpose.

My Lord Menas had recognized the barbarian girl. And in that moment of calamity he caught at two of his riders, crying out to them to take the Frankish maid and carry her down the steps.

They went with misgiving and backward glances.

"My Lord," I cried again, "thy men give way. Is this a time to think of women?"

Yet his eyes were fixed on her, and he was voiceless as a shackled slave. He nodded at me and smiled.

"Nay, Khalil, thou hast led her to me."

Then he groaned as if feeling the sting of a wound. His two nobles were near the statue, but before them now was a Frank. And surely the horse this warrior bestrode was Khutb.

I cursed the Bokharian who had without doubt offered the gray horse to the first knight of the invaders, for protection. This knight rode as one accustomed, with mailed knees gripping tight and a loose rein. Eh, the horse responded to his touch.

He reined between the two Greek nobles, and took the sword stroke of one upon his long shield, slaying the other with a sweep of his straight blade. Wheeling Khutb in a whirl of dust, he parried the heavy blow of the surviving Greek and swung up his sword. The Greek flinched aside and fled.

The men who had pressed around me were gone. There was heavy dust and smoke in the air, and a great outcry. I could no longer see Menas.

Anger gripped me, at loss of the horse, and I ran forward, catching the rein of the Frank as he lowered his sword.

"Dog of a Nazarene," I cried, "the horse is mine, and if there is aught of honor in thy soul, thou wilt dismount and let the sword be judge between us."

Now in my haste, I had spoken in my own tongue. Half his face was hidden by his vizor, but I saw his lips smile.

"The steed is mine," he made reply in Arabic, "and I will prove it upon thy body, O son of Yamen."

And he cast himself from the saddle. Striding toward me, he let slip his shield, seeing that I had none. So I knew him for a brave man—aye, and soon I knew him for a swordsman.

His blade was lighter than most Frankish weapons, and his long arm lashed out so swiftly, I gave ground. Once I parried, and he beat down my arm.

For a space we struck without ceasing, striving to slash within the other's arm, yet there was no evading his sweeping stroke. The mail links on my shoulder were hewn through, and I could feel the blood running against my ribs.

Again I gave ground and as he strode forward, I leaped, striking at his neck. My blade met steel that was not yielding. And I, Khalil, stood weaponless, my *chimitar* clattering on the stones. The Frank had struck it from my hand with his sword.

"Yield thee, youth!" he said, and again his lips smiled.

I had been too sure of my swiftness, too certain of my strength. Eh, I made the head bow of submission, saying—

"This also was to come upon my head."

And then Khutb, who had been standing near, walked up to me and thrust his nose against my hand. The Frank threw up his steel vizor and loosed the coif at his throat.

I looked into his eyes and, and, behold, he was of my height, and his skin was dark as

a desert man's. His eyes were blue, and clear, and surely his age was no greater than mine. Moreover the damp hair at his brow was black. On his sun-stained surcoat there was no device, but upon the shield he had thrown down was a red cross, greatly scarred and stained.

Still I looked at him. He had been riding Khutb, and a thought came to me.

"Art thou the Lord *Ricard*, from Palestine?" I asked.

"Aye so," he assented, "I am Richard from Palestine. Who art thou, to cry my name?"

"Thy prisoner, Khalil el Kahdr, chief of a thousand blades. Nor will I cry *Aman* to thee, so slay if thou wilt."

He glanced around and sheathed his long sword, then folded his arms, planting his feet wide, to consider me, smiling.

"Was the horse thine, O Khalil?"

"He was. I stole him from the mock-emperor, and that jackal of a Bokharian gave him up to thee."

"Aye so."

"And now have I a word for thee. The Frankish maid who waits thy coming is yet unharmed and unscathed. But it is a task of tasks to shield her, and—go thou and speak to her."

He followed my eyes to the statue, where the barbarian girl was standing, half hidden by the smoke.

"That is the daughter of the castellan of Edessa, to whom thou didst give the gray *kohlani* as a betrothal gift." I judged that he was surprized, beholding her in youth's garments, for he looked again at me, narrowly, and again at Khutb.

"Come!" he said. The Lord Richard was a man sparing of words. Striding toward the statue, he came to a stand beneath it, and that elfin Irene smiled down at him. Though she wore cloak and vest, tunic and pantaloons, her beauty was none the less for that.

The cold blue eyes of my Lord Richard glowed, and he caught his breath. His two hands he held up to her, and she leaped down. Gently he placed her upon her feet, nor did he take his hands swiftly from her waist.

It seemed that she, who had been glib of tongue with me, was stricken with his silence, for she lowered her eyes and answered hardly at all, though he questioned her. What passed between them was in the Frankish speech, and to this day I know naught of it.

My Lord Richard paid no heed to what went on, to right or left. His lean, dark cheeks were flushed, and when he turned upon me there was a mask of anger or sorrow on his face. He beckoned up an archer who had been loitering near, and spoke with him.

"O Khalil," he said, "who is that *al-comes?*"

I looked where he pointed, and beheld Menas, no longer Domastikos, no longer emperor, but captive on his white horse, with a hundred other Greeks—all surrounded by staring and jesting Frank men-at-arms. And all of them bore a red cross on their shields. For this reason I judged them to be the followers of my lord Richard, and verily this was the case.

"He," I made response, "was emperor for an hour—between the flight of the Greek host and thy coming. Before that he was Menas the Domastikos."

"Nay, Khalil, like a hawk stooping low, thou hast seen many things, but not this. The Emperor Murtzuple fled from the other side of the city when we entered the Galata gate."

"Aye, my Lord. And then Menas harangued the mob and had himself acclaimed master of the Greeks, here, in this forum. Thy swords and the faint hearts of his followers, and—" I thought of the few moments delay when Menas had looked upon Irene and had lingered until the path of safety was closed—"his own lust defeated his scheme."

"Wise Khalil!" The young barbarian smiled, leaning on his sheathed sword. "This is a rare day, and thou art a rare paynim. For thy shielding of this damosel ask of me any gift that I may in honor grant."

It was boldly and clearly spoken. Yet I could not without shame ask of him my liberty for the small service I had done this Nazarene maid. My soul warmed when I thought of Khutb, but how could a captive claim such a steed? I dared not look at the gray horse.

So I bent my head and he spoke again.

"One thing more thou mayest do in service to this maid. But wait—"

He pondered a moment and swung away, to walk between his men who called upon him loudly and with laughter after the

barbarian fashion. Irene followed him with her gaze, as if a little bewildered.

Verily, four years may alter a man and it may have been that she found my Lord Richard somewhat different than she had supposed. At their betrothal she had spent with him no more than seven days. Yet beyond any doubt she loved this youthful paladin of the Franks.

Of a sudden a thought seared my brain like an arrow. Richard of Brienne had sent his captain secretly to Menas before the siege. The twain had talked together for long hours and then the captain had been sent forth again secretly.

"O one without wit!" I cried upon myself. I beheld at last the full of Menas' treachery. He had agreed to betray the city, for a price no doubt. He had agreed with the Franks how they should set about the siege.

And then, mistaking both the strength of the city and the hardihood of his own men, he had sought to seize the throne and drive out the invaders, after Murtzuple had fled. In truth, he had not known which way to turn when the iron men rode into the square. He had played the part of a snake with two heads and had been well scotched.

For a space the young peer of the Franks talked with the defeated usurper, apart from the ranks, and then the Lord Richard came back and gave some orders to the archer. How should I know what was in his mind? My shoulder ached and my soul was sick.

"Eh, Khalil," he said, "knowest thou the statue of the giant woman?"

"It is in the forum of Constantine."

"Aye. Go thither with this, my follower," he nodded at the archer. "Show him the way. He will lead thee to the *sheriff** of the Montserrat Franks. Tell to this *sheriff* thy story, all of it, and come back with them to this place."

"I am thy captive." And then a demon of anger plagued me, for the pain in my shoulder. "Nay, send thy *kapitan*, the man who plotted with the Domastikos!"

If the Lord Richard had few words, he had a clear mind, and quick.

"Point out this *kapitan!*"

I looked through his followers, and again; but the powerful Frank who had come secretly to the house of Menas was not among them.

*A nobleman holding rank in an army.

"He is not here. Yet I knew him beyond doubt, having seen him at the sack of the village where thou wert pleased to carry off the gray horse."

"So thou didst hear this man of mine talk with Menas—when?"

The word was like a lash, and I told the barbarian lord what I had seen in the palace of the Greek, thinking that he was playing with me idly. In truth, before this I had thought to be slain. This Richard was not a man of mercy.

And verily his brow became dark and he stirred not for a space, except to knot his fingers on his belt.

"What a coil!" he said under his breath. "May God have mercy on his soul!" And he bade me sternly speak not again of such matters. "What now?" he cried when I still tarried.

"My sword," I explained.

The city burned, and the plunderers were like hungering wolves. If I went unarmed through the bazaar and the alleys I should be set upon by vagabonds. I had seen the Greek captain of cavalry die, and if my fate was near me, it were better to die here under the Frank's sword than to be torn into pieces.

Aye, if Richard were playing with me, as he had with Menas, there was no good in a few hours more of life. He motioned to the archer, who picked up my *chimitar* and thrust it out toward me. Then the young barbarian did a courteous thing. He spoke quickly to the warrior, who shifted the sword so that it lay with its point in one hand, its hilt across the other arm, toward me.

"May it be remembered, on thy behalf!" I cried, taking it, and bowing. And then I dared his anger again. "This maiden—wilt thou have her in thy care henceforth?"

Whereupon the barbarian Irene looked from under her lashes at the youth, as a maid will when she judges matters for herself in veiled fashion. As for Richard, his eyes glowed upon me strangely.

"Never harm shall come to her, while I live."

WITH the archer stalking beside me, staring at every tumult, I made my way through the throngs. Doubt was heavy upon me, because I was being sent to a strange chieftain of the Franks, and because I was very weary.

By the smell in the alleys I knew we were passing through the Jews' quarter. It was the custom of the Greek tanners to carry the filthy water from the tanneries in carts and dump it under the noses of the Jews. Here the houses leaned close together overhead, and it was a place of gloom under the smoke-veiled sky. I turned aside and sought the square as my lord Richard had directed.

We had passed a few Franks, riding through the streets in groups, and some had halted us, until the archer talked with them and we were permitted to go on.

This archer had a green hood close drawn over his head, and a fat face red as fire and eyes that seemed to be asleep, but for all that he did not cease watching me. When we came to a throng in the square he pushed through, making way with both elbows, and pulling me with him.

The crowd had gathered around an old man and a girl. The old man was a Greek merchant of the poorer sort, and by the tears on his cheeks it was clear that the girl was his daughter. She had flung herself on the ground, and her face was smudged and stained as if she had been rubbing dirt upon it. Her garments were soiled and disordered, as if she had thrown them on in haste.

Two horsemen and a dozen warriors were about her, and these were Franks. The taller of the two riders was richly clad in a fur-edged mantle, with a gold chain at his throat. His shoulders were heavy, and his lips, and his eyes were a faded blue.

I knew that he was an officer of some kind because he had a small baton tipped with a gold crown in his belt—but I did not think he had been in the fighting that day.

He was looking at the Greek girl, and at two of his men who were pulling her up by the arms, trying to make her stand on her feet. To him the archer went, and they talked, glancing at me.

Then this *sheriff* spoke impatiently to the two warriors, and the old Greek wailed. Some one laughed, because the *sheriff* had given order to strip the garments from the young girl.

She struggled without weeping, and it was clear that the dirt had been put upon her face to hide her beauty, for she was lithe of limb and erect of stature, and her terrified eyes were like dark pearls. When even her sandals had been wrenched from her, the tall Frank leaned down and took her chin between thumb and forefinger, to scrutinize her face.

Again he gave an order, and this time the Frankish warriors hung back and muttered. It speaks ill of a leader when he asks of his men a deed that shames them. At length one of them sought on the ground and picked up a long cord. With this he bound the wrists of the silent girl, and tied the free end of the cord to the tail of the *sheriff's* horse. As he did so, my guard, the archer, spat.

"That will teach the wanton to come to her feet at call," so said the Frank. And he spoke in Arabic, to me. "What seekest thou, dog?"

Before this never a man had named a chieftain of the Ibna al Yamen so, and lived. I drew the edge of the *khalat* over my forehead and looked upon the ground.

"Thy tongue shall feel the dagger, an thou answer not," he went on, his lips drawing back upon his teeth. "I have dealt with thy *saracin* folk before now—"

"Lord," I cried, lest he add worse to my shame, "I was sent to lead this archer to thee, and to tell thee a tale—"

"Who sent thee?"

"The Sieur de Brienne."

At this he fell silent, and I told him of the maiden Irene, and of the fight in the square.

"Is that all the tale?" He rubbed his long chin and eyed me as if I were the bait of a trap. Verily it was a strange thing that I should have been sent to this man. The gray-haired Greek, thinking this a favorable instant, flung himself on his knees and embraced the *sheriff's* stirrup, and moaned when he was kicked back upon the ground.

Nay, before then I had seen men of the breed of this Frank—*wazirs* and *khayias*, who had been given the staff of authority and had become swollen with the pride of their office.

"Thou liest, Khalil—the damoiselle Irene abides at Edessa. She is poor enough in goods and gear by now—is she fair to look upon? Has she beauty?"

"Aye, Lord."

His eyes searched me, and he felt of chin and lips.

"Well, we shall see this morsel for ourselves. I mind, she was betrothed to me four years ago—to me, Richard, Sieur de Brienne, now constable to Montserrat."

EH, BEFORE then I had ached, but now my soul burned. I led the way back to the forum of Theodosius with laggard step, followed by the archer, and by the constable, who was Richard of Brienne. And he was followed perforce by the Greek girl, who shook her hair about her cheeks to hide her sorrow.

Presently he bethought him of her, and bade the archer cut her loose. She fled into the shadows and the very vagabonds of the refuse piles gave her their cloaks.

But my lord of Brienne told me that I was dull of ear and wit—that the Frank who had fought with me was the knight Richard d'Alençon, who was such another young fool. So said the constable, and I thought that surely there had been a feud between the twain.

Four years had wrought a change in this Frank. He was handsome still, but his blue eyes were seamed, and his pride had altered into arrogance. He still held his heavy shoulders well, yet he talked with me, a *saracin*, of the beauties of the young Irene and how he had ceased to think of her since the death of her father, who had been a power in Edessa.

"And the gray colt—Khutb—has she it still?"

"Aye, Lord."

Then it was that utter misery came upon me. This boar of a Frank who wore raking spurs would ride Khutb. This also was to come upon my head.

Fool! Thrice fool, to listen to the talk of a dreaming maid and to think to find her youthful palladin in the flesh as she had pictured him. Surely Richard d'Alençon had seemed to me to be her betrothed, and as for the constable—only sorrow and the death of her dreams would come to her at his hand.

A thought came to me, and I knew at once it was good. It is always good to end suspense, and a man may not journey past the spot where his grave is dug.

Coming close to the mailed knee of the constable, I spoke softly:

"Lord, there is another tale to be told. Nay, this is our way—"

Taking the rein of the charger, I turned aside into the Jews' alley where the smoke was now ruddy hued afar where flames glowed. The archer kept abreast me, but the squire and the men-at-arms strung out behind, picking their way through the heaps of garbage.

"Lord, I dwelt in the palace of *al-comes* Menas, the Domastikos. There I saw thy man, thy *kapitan*."

What had passed between the man of the constable and Menas I did not know, nor do I know now. Nevertheless, beyond all doubt the bargain held treachery in it.

I heard the Sieur de Brienne catch his breath, and felt his hand move on his belt as he leaned lower to peer at me. The sun had set and the glow of fire was like a smoking torch afar.

"It was agreed between thy *kapitan* and the Lord Menas, for a sum in gold—" I laughed up in his face. "Menas is a captive and he has woman's tongue for secrets!"

The hand of the constable gripped the short iron mace at his belt and swung it high, high above my head. He cursed and wrenched himself around in the saddle for the blow.

And my hand that had been upon the hilt of my *chimitar* rose, and my curved blade passed upward and outward beneath his beard. He gave neither cry nor moan, but fell forward against the charger's neck as I drew my sword clear and turned to face the archer.

Eh, that archer must have been heavy with sleep. His back was toward me and he was breathing like a bullock. It was no time for wondering. I thrust the dying constable from the saddle, and leaped into his seat, drawing tight the rein.

The charger reared, and from behind came the shout of the constable's men, who had not seen in that dim light the blow that slew him, but who had heard the clang of his fall, and had seen me mount to the saddle.

But the horse sprang forward, and I guided him aside into another alley. A bolt from a crossbow whipped over me, and the shouting grew, until it dwindled and died behind me. The squire and the men-at-arms had stopped, perforce, to attend their lord.

With a sword at my hip and a horse between my thighs I considered what next to do.

Time pressed, I sought the *registan*, where I had left the young Richard. Looking back over my shoulder I beheld the giant statue of the white woman, with its face rose-hued from the reflection of flames. Aye, and a veil of smoke about its head.

Constantinople was burning. And the voice of the city was as a woman's voice, shrill with the ululation of fear. Vagabonds and grandees, slaves and masters fled from they knew not what. Cursing the fleeing, groups of Venetian sailors with axes struggled to get nearer to the flames, to cut away some of the wooden buildings in its path. I saw a slave stab his master to death, and a soldier of Menas, who had cast aside helmet and red cloak, grapple the slave for the purse of the dead man.

I saw a Jew with a pack mounted on an ass, beating the ass in vain to make it go somewhither, and a throng of Frankish men-at-arms mocked him as they cooked supper and tended their hurts.

At the forum of Theodosius were many men, but neither the knight Richard nor the barbarian girl. A tanner, with a club upon one shoulder and a sack on the other, bade me look for them at the palace of Menas.

"Ho, paynim! There is blood on thy horse. Hail to the new emperor—Death!"

He staggered and laughed and wandered away. There was a howling as of wolves that pull down living meat. Eh, these were two legged wolves that held the streets this night. No man knew who had gained the upper hand in the city; some said that the Franks had fled and there were two emperors.

But in the courtyard of the Domastikos I saw hundreds of horses feeding quietly, tended by men-at-arms, and other Franks grouped around the pots and the fires that were barely cold from the morning meal of the dead Northmen.

I dismounted and let loose the charger in the courtyard. My mind was made up. True is it written, "Not an arrow is sped but its destination is marked upon it." The constable of the Franks had found his grave in the dark alley, and I—it seemed to me the hour of my fate was at hand. What availed a jackal's flight?

The inner court of the palace was deserted, except by the marble women whose hands upheld the roof; only two archers stood at the door beyond the whispering gallery. The niches upon the stairs were empty, the curtains pulled down.

But in the gallery of the fountain the young Richard stood, his hands thrust through his belt, his helm unlaced and put aside. A boy squire held his shield in readiness to his hand.

I looked for Irene and beheld her not. It was written that I should not set eyes on her again. In a chair by the ebony table sat my Lord Menas, the henna red standing forth on his pallid skin, his fingers groping at his throat. And apart from him swaggered a great figure in muddied surcoat and rusted mail.

And this was the captain of the dead Richard of Brienne.

"Where is the constable?" the young Richard cried. "Came he with thee?"

I made the salaam of greeting and answered thus:

"He came not, nor will he ever come. He lies dead in the alleys behind the tanneries."

Menas and the other looked upon me as if a djinn had risen from the fountain and confronted them, and the Montserrat captain cried out angrily. The youth listened to him and turned to me.

"The Sieur de Brienne was not in the assault. He had command of the Montserrat and Bavarian companies that held our camp. No one among them has been wounded."

"*Wai*," I said, "I saw him fall with a sword through his throat. His fate was at hand and no man may increase the number of his days."

Suspicion flamed in the bearded face of the Montserrat captain, and he shook his head savagely. He glowered at Menas, and his hand jerked to his sword. The young knight laughed and stepped between them.

"Nay, Barthelemi—I summoned thee, to meet thy master. Go, now, and bury him. And—mark me, Barthelemi—I know you came hither to plot with this Greek prince. That was a traitor's mission. For the fair name and honor of thy master, seal thy lips. And go!"

The man called Barthelemi looked long upon the youth, then turned on his heel and left as if indeed his lips had been sealed. At once the knight spoke to Menas, and the Greek started up from his seat.

"Domastikos, my men have come to me with tidings. The Montserrat companies and the Bavarians hold the center of the city. They should have kept to their post, our camp in the plain. Thy men also were drawn up and waiting, yet not for my onset. I know the man Barthelemi came to thee and there was an agreement made—and now I say to thee this." He stepped to the side of the gallery and drew back with his

own hand the curtain that had shut out the red glare of flames, the tumult of the streets and the gleaming lights of the Venetian galleys along the sea-wall. "It is the hour, Menas, when the dregs of treachery are bitter. What passed between thee and our allies, I know not. But the hour is past when your Greeks and the Italians of Montserrat could have seized the city."

Menas half smiled, as if the words of the young Frank had no meaning in his ears.

"Bethink thee, my Lord," went on the knight, "whether it is not better to play the part of an honest foe, who has yielded to greater power, than to make public thy compact with the constable of Montserrat who is dead?"

Still Menas kept silence, outwardly amiable.

"If I had not withdrawn my men from the wall, the Venetians would never have carried a tower," he said at last.

Richard looked at him steadily.

"As to that, I know not. The Sieur de Brienne often spoke to the commanders of our host, describing the great treasures in this city. He had a thirst for gold, and authority, and more than that I will not say, save this—" he paused in his long stride in front of the Greek, and waited until Menas met his eyes, "the Sieur de Brienne lived as he lived, and no man may call despite upon his name, now that his spirit has passed."

For an instant his fingers touched the mail gauntlet in his belt, and Menas bowed assent. At a sign from the knight, the shield bearer escorted the Greek from the chamber.

Verily, Menas had spoken truly. These men of the Cross were gallant fools. A handful of them had stormed Constantinople, and hoped to launch a new crusade in this city of old intrigues, and age-old treachery.

"Khalil!" cried young Richard. "How did the Lord of Brienne die?"

"He was slain by a captive that he abused."

He brushed his hand across his forehead.

"It was like him. There was no faith in him. But I shall say to the damosel Irene that he fell in the street fighting."

"Aye, be it so."

Foolish youth, who loved the barbarian maid from the instant he had first seen her—who knew that she awaited the coming of the Sieur de Brienne. And who would suffer no evil word to be said of the man who was his enemy.

How can two youths seek the same maiden to wife and not draw the sword of hatred?

"Why hast thou come back, Khalil? Alone!"

"I am thy captive, *Ricard*."

He held out his hand to me, laughing.

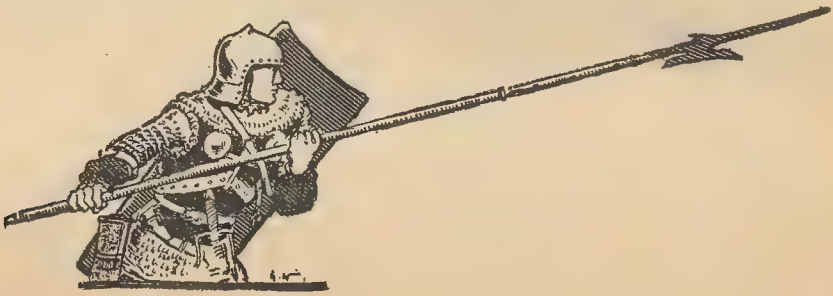
"Nay, and again nay. I have heard from the damosel Irene how thou hast shielded her. No prisoner, thou! Go, or abide as my guest, an thou wilt!"

Now I had seen what I had seen. The eyes of a maiden hold few secrets from the glance of wisdom. The thought had come to me that the barbarian girl would love this youth. He, too, was a barbarian, yet there was in him the bright steel of honor.

And he had overcome me with the sword. I longed to stand against him again and strive with the steel blades, for he was worthy, even of the girl who had warmed my heart—aye, she had stirred the heart of Khalil.

"May thy way be open to thee!" I made the salaam of leave-taking, and he took my hand in his. "Thou art a bold youth—even a brother to Khalil. I go."

And in the second watch of that night, with the flames at our heels, we rode through the portal of Constantinople the Great—Khutb and I. Nay, I lifted the gray horse out of the line under the eyes of all the Franks.



Author of "The Profaned Shovel."

MORALE—that something that makes men fight through, whether it be against the spitting muzzles of guns or the gentle blasts of hellish heat from the gaping doors of open-hearth furnaces—what is it? Jock Campbell, the huge open-hearth superintendent of Midwest Steel, did not know, though record after record had been met and bested by his men and his fires because of it.

And what destroys it? What is it that turns a gang of steel-slogging men, cursing their jobs but whipping them, into a bunch of muted dummies heaving listlessly with their shovels, looking slant-eyed at one another, slouching sullenly about the floor in front of their own furnaces and having no truck with their neighbors?

That unanswerable question was the reason that Jock Campbell's stiff gray hair was a little stiffer and a little grayer as he ran his fingers through it one sunny June morning. That was why he was sitting in his cubbyhole of an office in the far end of the charging-floor rather than tearing out through the train-long building in a mad attempt to do ten things at once. The tiniest little things caused it—or did not! And those things had the most enormous results.

His long row of ten open hearths was not tapping as many heats as it should. There were off heats, too—a curse be on his three melters who should know better, but who were bit by the same bug! His little crew of a hundred men was responsible for the activities of two thousand. His men made the steel; those others transported it, rolled it, hammered it, chipped it and pickled it. If his bunch slowed down, they all did. They had to, for there was that much less steel to work.

What had started it? Jock snorted and nearly split the top of his desk with a blow of his mighty fist. Of all things! "Red" Sullivan, that fire-eating first helper on No. 5 furnace, had burnt himself! A paper of matches, hands cupped about the flashing sputter at the end of his pill, a *s-s-puff*—and the palm of Red's hand converted into a stinging blister, rimmed with charred flesh and smarting like the ——.

In itself a burn was nothing; a man had to get burnt at least once before he was considered a steel-maker. Ole Oleson, who had recently taken his burn under Red's able guidance, had been temporarily boosted to Red's job, and that was that. But—the man who for years had played with heats higher than two thousand degrees was now laid up in the hospital by a paper of matches!

Then the roof of No. 9 furnace fell in, and the significance of a paper of matches became tremendous. That roof had just been rebuilt the week before, but down she came, playing hob with a special heat of steel. It was not the first time a roof had dropped, by a long shot, but this time—the men began to look at one another sidewise.

"The Spirit of Steel," copyright, 1926, by Edmund M. Littell.

Then a tap-hole opened up too soon, dumping into the cinder pit below the opposite side of the furnace fully half of the hundred tons of steel it retained, before a ladle could be set to catch it. It was a disaster, but Jock rejoiced, for it was the third one. The men would settle down to their jobs; the atmosphere would clear. But it did not.

It would do no slightest good to charge down the floor and bellow. Jock had tried that once several years before, and had been left with ten cold furnaces on his hands. That had been the beginning of the gray in his wiry hair. Men like to be driven, but only when they are driving themselves. How can you charge and bellow when there is nothing to charge at?

The men cursed, but their oaths lacked fire; they worked, but their shovels did not flash; they talked, but in lifeless voices. They had let down, grown too careful. And, by the fires of the hells he was master of, Jock was doing the same! But what else was there to do? How could he—

A foot scraped on the steel-plated floor outside, a fat mill envelope slithered across his dusty desk, and Jock Campbell's flayed nerves jerked him about.

There stood the tiniest atom of humanity that had ever got past a timekeeper's gate. In a place where the largest man of them all—Jock Campbell himself—was dwarfed to midget size, this visitor was positively microscopic.

"Hel-lo," said Jock, and the voice that could bellow orders against the racket of steel-making sounded like a kettle-drum. "Who let you in?"

A pair of brown eyes looked up at him shyly. The boy was standing up and Jock was sitting down, yet those eyes were below his. There was a wistful look on the round face, like that of a dog who is not sure what is about to happen, but hopes for the best.

"That bald fella with the big glasses down at the gate," said the runt—and grinned.

"An' what do ye do besides grin?" asked Jock, swinging his chair around so he could get a full view of the kid.

"Messenger boy. I run errands."

The boy strove to be matter-of-fact in his pronouncement, but there was a ring of pride in his voice. As a badge to prove his condition of servitude he stepped back and showed a large brief-case that hung from his shoulder on a strap. It was filled with department mail and bulked so large that to save his life Jock could not have told whether he stepped around it or actually swung it forward.

"I see," said Jock soberly, and thrust his hands into his pockets lest he make the mistake of laying it caressingly on the sturdy shoulder of the little fellow. "An' what might yer name be?"

"Cazak. Demetrius Leonidus Cazak. Everybody calls me 'Runt'."

Jock's great hand rose from his pocket and passed speculatively—and concealingly—over lips that twitched.

"What are ye goin' to do when ye grow up?"

"I—I ain't goin' to grow no more," said Runt, dropping his eyes to supervise a circle-making movement of his toe in the dust of the floor. "I'm sixteen now—" the eyes came up brightly—"but you'd never know it, would you? Why, sometimes I can get into the movies without payin' a cent."

"Then what misguided offspring o' deception sent ye to this place?"

"Nobody. I just came. Ain't got no folks." His brown eyes turned to look down the long shadowed floor. "I—steel-makin'—well, I always wanted to work in a steel mill."

Jock's hand slipped quickly back into his pocket and he sat thoughtfully for a moment.

"Errand boy, eh? Know yer way around?"

"Sure. Been here a week."

And Jock had never noticed him! Small wonder, when you think of his size. He has escaped notice simply because other affairs had been more compelling, and now that an open-hearth crew had shrunk to peanut size this lad had his head above the crowd.

"Got any errands you want handled?"

The wistful look was gone from his eyes; the man-to-man offer was made sturdily. Jock scratched his head—a rasping sound as blunt fingers scraped through the bristles—and cocked a thoughtful eye down the long charging-floor.

"See that gang makin' bottom down there?"

He pointed toward the far end of the street-wide floor, shadowy, deserted and littered with flat-topped piles of steel-making materials, a parade of them between

the twenty-foot spread of the charging-machine rails. A blast of light sprayed across the further end of the floor, throwing into sharp relief the tiny figures of men who—listlessly!—tossed dolomite into the incandescence of an open furnace.

"Sure," said the boy eagerly.

He seemed to be on his toes, as is a pup that awaits the tossing of a stick by its master.

"Well, you go down there an' ask Barney to send me a left-handed rabblin' bar, will ye? He's the skinny fella with the gold teeth."

"Sure," said Runt and whirled away, his brief-case flopping.

"Hey! Got time to bring it back here?"

"Sure!"

The kid ducked out from beneath his strap and set his load carefully against the wall.

This time he ran, not taking time to go to the outer edge of the floor where a clear space permitted rapid going, but darting along between and over the piles of feldspar, dolomite and ferro. He seemed to take delight in leaping over those obstacles; as though they had been put there to give him something to do. That was the spirit the men should have—

Jock sat erect and clapped his hand down on his knee. By the ten tapping spouts of his little hells, he had forgotten his troubles! That kid had done it! He dropped his chin to his chest and looked down at nothing.

THE next thing Jock heard was a clatter along the floor outside, and he looked up to a sight never before seen in this arena where strong men held forth. The little shrimp was plugging along toward him, sweat rolling down his face, his teeth bared in a determined grin, dragging behind him a steel bar at least four times as long as himself. He hugged one end beneath his arm, his hands choking it just behind the loop of its handle; the other end, melted from a bath in molten steel and with a cake of slag on it as big as two fists—Jock's fists—dragged along behind.

"Here it is," he panted, dropping it with a clang outside Jock's door. "He said if it wasn't left-handed enough he'd send the other one."

Jock stepped out of his office and picked up the bar, examining its handle very carefully. He swung it up from the floor, holding it steady with the strength of one mighty wrist, and sighted along its length in frowning absorption.

"Gosh!" breathed Runt.

"What's that?"

"If I was that strong I'd ha' brought both of 'em. He had two for me but I couldn't swing 'em."

"Well, it ain't necessary," said Jock gruffly. "This one'll do fine." He lowered the bar to the floor and added, "Much obliged."

"Oh, that's all right."

Runt lingered a moment as if to add something more, but turned without doing it and picked up his brief-case. He ducked his head through the strap and settled the load against his hip.

"I'll be back again this afternoon," he announced then. "If you got any more jobs for me, I'll be ready to handle 'em."

After which he conveyed his bundle of mill correspondence toward the rear of the building.

This time he walked along the outer edge of the floor where the going was unimpeded—and where the men loafed between spells of furnace labor. Ten water-tanks and ten high-backed wooden benches provided club-room and resting place for each of the crews along the road. Or they could take a few steps more and lean over the guard-rail to get full benefit of any breeze that stirred along the second-story elevation. Jock slipped out of his office and watched the boy's progress.

He stopped opposite No. 4 furnace, where "Sweet" Mullin was oreing down a heat, watched the lackadaisical labors of the barrel-framed man and his helpers until, remembering his duties, he tore himself away.

His journey lasted only as far as the next furnace, however, where Ole Oleson was resting. There he stopped for a chat, at first keeping a respectful distance from the white-haired second helper, who was Jock's only ally in this hour of trouble, but gradually inching forward until he was leaning against the bench. A remark—doubtless a question, for there was a little cock of his head—a step forward while Ole was replying. Jock wanted to go down and hug the little shrimp.

Then something was transferred from Ole's pocket to Runt's, and he went on. This time he ran, to make up for lost time.

And as he disappeared at the far end of the floor Jock clapped his hands together softly. The kid had a way with him!

Jock made it a point to be in his office when Runt arrived after lunch, but had his head buried in a mass of documents. He looked up when the envelope plopped on his desk and pretended great astonishment at the unusual bulk of the brief-case.

"Who's writin' all them messages?"

"That ain't all mail. It's stuff for some o' the men," said the kid, waving a careless hand in the direction of the floor beyond. "Chocolate bars, eatin' tabacco, pop, cigarets."

"Who told ye to do that?" asked Jock sternly. The kid looked up at him with that wistful look.

"Why, nobody. I just asked 'em if I could do any errands. Why? Can't I?"

Once more Jock had to watch his hands. He folded them behind his head, tilted back and frowned judicially.

"Well, don't know as it hurts," said he. "But I don't want ye takin' up too much o' their time." As if he wouldn't give his shirt to see them occupied with something besides their own thoughts! "An' ye might lose yer job. Ye can't run arrands fer every one in the plant an' deliver yer mail on time."

"I don't," said the kid quickly. "I don't have no truck with nobody but the open hearth."

"So, yer a fire-eater, are ye? Well, see to it that ye don't interfere. We're after a record this month."

"Are we?" The kid's eyes lighted up, and Jock made careful note of that "we." "If there's anything I can do—"

After a record? They were always after records! Fat chance of doing anything this month, but—if that kid could get the men back into their old spirit—

"Don't know as there is," said Jock. "But if ye want to do little things fer the men an' don't keep 'em from work—why, I don't mind."

And from that moment on the shrimp began to wrap those bare-torsoed steel-sloggers around his fingers in a way that they'll never forget to their dying day. Within ten minutes he was the innocent cause of a near battle—the first flash of human fire that had been seen since that tap-hole opened up.

Ole Oleson and "Bull" Dard, of furnaces Nos. 5 and 6, respectively, drew him aside and handed him what appeared to be a chocolate bar.

"Take this over to Sweet Mullin and give it to 'im with me love," said Bull. There was a twinkle in his eyes that those brown ones caught. "Maybe ye'd better not, though. He might get rough."

He made as if to withdraw the package, but Runt seized it.

"Naw, I ain't afraid," said he. "Tell him who sent it?"

"Sure."

Sweet Mullin had a fondness for candy. That accounted for his name, though it had taken not a few hammer blows from his own fists to shorten it from Sweetie. His barrel of a body was capable of absorbing pounds of candy and tons of work—when in the mood—and he popped the confection into his mouth without too careful an inspection, as Bull had anticipated. It proved to be tar, and Sweet, bellowing curses through his blackened teeth, grabbed Runt and hoisted him into the air.

"B-Bull D-Dard sent it with his l-l-love," stammered Runt between tooth-rattling shakes.

"Love, hey?" roared Sweet. "Where is that goggle-eyed shovel-slinger?"

He strode down the floor and Runt perforce accompanied him, for Sweet had not released him. He had merely lowered his hand with Runt still in its grip, and the kid was swinging beside his knee like a bundle of clothes loosely tied.

Bull was waiting for him, as was also Ole, both of them in high good humor. But when Sweet swung Runt into the air above his head and charged with a roar of rage their laughter stopped. It was not in their plans that Runt be used with felonious intent. Somehow they managed to quiet Sweet before he made lethal use of his human weapon, and by that time the humor of it struck him. Then they all had a laugh—laugh!—and Runt's was the loudest.

Some of those who were shaken out of their lethargy at the prospect of a fight noticed that there were tears of pain in the kid's eyes even as he laughed, but they said nothing about it—then. It was Jock, who by an odd chance happened by just afterward, that mentioned it.

"Hurt ye, kid?" And this time a huge paw did fall gently upon the little shoulder.

"Hurt? Naw!" There was a delighted

light in the big brown eyes, then concern. "I didn't interfere none, did I?"

"I guess ye'll know when yer interferin'," said Jock, and the delight returned to the little face. "How'd ye like to work here all the time?"

"Can I? Honest?" was his only reply, but it was enough.

"Maybe I can fix it," said Jock, who knew that the "bald fella with the big glasses down at the gate" would give him anything he wanted. "Do yer job today an' report here in the morning."

They parted, Runt fairly dancing away with his brief-case, and Jock to have speech with the employment manager, and so did the crew of fire-nursing roughnecks become augmented by one.

Sweet Mullin took a great shine to Runt after the tar-biting affair. It was he who, the very next day, permitted Runt to try his hand at a shovel. And bottom-making, too, the toughest job on the floor.

"The dad-burned fly-speck!" he said afterward to his neighbors, Bull and Ole. "He ain't much biggern' a shovel, but he's got a heart as big as a ladle! He fought that dolomite like a wild man, but he had to quit. Heat didn't get him—it was his size, and he knew it. Why, I bet he'd walk through a furnace and never peep. But you can't drive a spike with a tack-hammer, and the kid just couldn't do it."

"What did he do?" asked Ole.

"Oh, he seen he was too small. Dropped out o' the circle an' took to scrapin' up the dolomite so we could get at it quicker. Fussed around that pile like a woman sweepin' floors. Worked up close to the furnace, too, little ——! Wouldn't get on the cool side. No, sir!"

"Tough," said Bull. "If we could only stretch him out some he'd make a blame good man."

"Yeah. He wants to be a steel man so bad it hurts. Says we gotta break the record this month. An' if any furnace-nursin' son of a cinder-hopper thinks I'm goin' to let down—"

He stared fiercely at his listeners—and that made three furnaces Jock could count on.

RUNT'S pernicious infection of the heat-calloused hearts of men was not effective solely upon Sweet Mullin. Barney, that skinny first helper with the gold teeth, had been inoculated from the moment Runt appeared to ask for a left-handed rabbling bar. If his attack upon his furnace had been listless that day, the fishy look in his eyes changed when that tiny bundle of enthusiasm set out for Jock's office dragging a cumbersome nuisance behind him. And having introduced himself in such a manner, Runt had a perfectly legitimate excuse for making further overtures.

The eatin' tabacco he carried in his brief-case that first afternoon was destined for Barney's wiry jaws. And Runt's sore spots still stung as he related with much laughter his airplane experience in the hands of Sweet Mullin. Who could remain indifferent to such a visitor? Certainly not Barney, even though he had frozen up solid on the day the roof of his furnace fell in.

It was Barney who let him work the water-valve levers and explained how the drafts changed their course through the checker-work of brick beneath the floor. It was Barney who first heard of Runt's ambition to be a steel man, and whose voice grew harsh as he urged the kid to get out of such a life. For he knew that Runt was too small, though he was the last man in the world who had the nerve to tell him so. And it was Barney who, on the third day of Runt's sojourn on the floor, was knocked out by the feather-weight mite.

There is a good reason for the flat tops on those piles of steel-making material. They never maintain the cone shape characteristic of dumped heaps for very long. It's the result of a race between the cranes and the charging machine. All day long the cranes roll up and down the floor swinging beneath their bridging girders great trays loaded with ferro, dolomite or spar, and dumping them where the crews have reduced a pile. And all day long the great charging machine grumbles back and forth on the tracks beneath.

That charging machine is the best friend an open-hearth man has, for it takes out of his hands the necessity of shoveling some sixty tons of scrap, ore and limestone for every heat tapped. It looks like a huge elephant straddling the floor with wheeled legs on its twenty-foot tracks. Especially does it resemble that beast when it stops in front of a furnace with a train of loaded charging boxes between it and the open doors and picks up one of the coffin-shaped boxes. A heavy bar, like a stiff trunk, reaches out between its forelegs, picks up a

box, sticks it far inside the glowing maw of the eighty-foot cave of hell, dumps it and sets it back on the flatcar. And Jerry, sitting in his little coop between its hind legs, is the mahout who rides it and uses switch levers instead of a goad.

What difference does it make if a few tons of piled material happen to be in front of those slow-moving axles? It's just leveled down, that's all, until the long stretch of floor looks like a three-foot-high mountain range with all its peaks knocked off by some ruthless force. And the cranes, for all their flitting back and forth above, are never able to keep many cone-shaped piles in evidence.

Open-hearth men are normally very careful about such a relentlessly friendly machine. They react to its approach by instinct and keep out of its way, knowing that Jerry can't see very well from his howdah. And if they don't hear the dull clank of its warning gong, the grinding vibration of its advance warns them through the floor. But these were not normal men; they were dead from the neck up for some mysterious reason, and Barney was dumber than the rest.

He was out between those tracks for no reason whatsoever, and the charging machine was grinding along toward its hangout between No. 10 furnace and the mixer, where Jerry was going to oil up.

"Jest standin' around with my teeth in my mouth," said Barney afterward.

The first thing he knew, something hit him like a thousand of brick. It was Runt. Down they went, and Barney's head struck the floor between two piles of stuff and he passed out.

When he woke up, Runt was pouring a bucket of water down his neck, Jerry was hanging over him and cussing a streak, and the crews of 10 and 8 were running up. The presence of Jerry and the charging-machine told him the story. Barney had helped to dig a flattened man out of the leveled top of a pile of ferro one day.

"You done that?" he asked of Runt, and the kid nodded.

"Ain't got no time to bury no guys," said he carelessly. "Got a record to bust."

Barney sat up, felt the knob on the back of his head, wiped the water out of his eyes and broke into a string of devastating curses.

"I'll be teetotally charred if I ever expected to get knocked out by a foreshortened chunk of a half-man like you," was what he conveyed while his gold teeth glittered a reflection of his furnace fires. "Records ya want busted, is it? Why, you unforgetable shrimp, I'll tap metal out o' this furnace whether there's a roof on it or not!"

He scrambled to his feet and shook himself, while the neighbor crews grinned at the first shrill-voiced eruption that had come from him in days.

"Hear what this steel man says?" Barney snarled at them. "He wants some records busted. An' if you birds don't come across I'll split my shovel over yer heads!"

Jock Campbell got that news in fairly rapid time. It took only thirty minutes for the report to get to the other end of the floor, whereas a few days before it never would have reached him. The lines of communication were gradually being restored; the tiny burr of enthusiasm in the side of his inert organism was beginning to wake it up.

Jock also had a visit from Barney a short time thereafter. And it was Barney who was the aggressor instead of the other way around.

"That insignificant snip of a sawed-off errand-runner wants to be a steel man," said Barney with his old-time forcefulness, "an' I'm here to say somethin's got to be done about it."

Strong talk from a man to his boss, but Jock was hearing language that meant something far removed from impertinence. He scratched his bristled head and wanted, in a very quiet voice, to know how.

"He ain't big enough to swing a shovel, Sweet Mullin'll tell ye that."

"Put him on a crane, then. He's big enough to yank levers. Been takin' lessons from Jerry."

"We'll have a talk with Jerry," conceded Jock.

Jerry looked about carefully before he replied. No telling when that kid would pop up.

"He's too light," he almost whispered. "Takes two hands to work the controller an' when it comes to workin' the foot-brake and yankin' a switch too—no chance."

Silence. The three men looked at one another. Jock frowned, Jerry smiled—down, not up—and Barney's gold teeth hid behind tightened lips.

"Maybe he'll get along as he is," said

Jock at last. "Just keep him hoppin' with errands an' things. Maybe he'll quit askin'."

But Runt was too full of his desire. He caught Jock in his office later on. Mighty unfair it was of that little fellow to entrap a man three times his size, but he did it without mercy. Jock, who unflinchingly had faced sudden death at the hands of maddened men, almost shuddered at the prospect of the interview.

"I was wonderin'," began Runt, "I was wonderin' if I could get me a better job."

There was a manlike ring to his voice even if he did hesitate a bit. Nothing of the beggar in it at all. But he didn't know what his eyes did to those who looked into them.

"What's the matter?" growled Jock. "Ain't the boys treatin' ye right?"

"Sure. Finest bunch ever was. But—I'd like to get in on the steel-makin'. I—I know I can't work a furnace, I tried it. But maybe—" he turned those eyes full force on his big boss—"maybe I could run a crane."

Jock wished he had never seen the lad. He would have preferred fighting out of these human doldrums by himself. What did it matter, losing some tonnage, beside the necessity of quenching the invincible spirit wrapped up in this small package? Jock was a coward. He hedged.

"An' take another man's job? Ye wouldn't do that, would ye?"

"No, sir!" very emphatically. "I just wanted to put in for the next chance. I ain't in no hurry."

"That's the stuff," smiled Jock with a sigh. "Yer doin' more steel-makin' right now than any man on the floor if ye only knew it. An' if ye keep it up we'll get a record busted next month, for sure."

"Think so? Gosh!" There was a proud light in the brown eyes. "Well, I gotta beat it. Order a ladle o' hot metal for No. 2. I just wanted to tell ya, that's all."

Once more the kid leaped those piles of material as he went down toward the mixer. And Jock—he swung back to his desk as guiltily as if he had been caught with his hand in another man's lunch box. Pretty wise, that kid. He knew that he wasn't strong enough to swing a heavy job so he asked for a crane. That way he could multiply his puny strength by ten thousand—as if muscle could not be hired by the ton!

It was heart that Jock wanted; heart and spirit that carried on regardless of defeats. Look at the way the kid was pegging away at Tom Gantry, refusing to be squelched by the stubborn unfriendliness of the sullen man.

Tom Gantry was first helper on No. 2, an eagle-beaked, thin-lipped man with a forward thrust to his head. He had been on Runt's calling list ever since that first day, but had rejected friendly overtures with speechless consistency. It was Tom's furnace that had broken loose at the tap-hole, and his steely eyes had grown dull looking for the next accident. "I'll get mine" was the sum of his mood, and he had no time for errand-boys. But had that stopped Runt? Not in the least.

He was coming back now, following the crane that rumbled slowly along, swinging a steel-cased, brick-lined ladle full of hot metal. He was watching the craneman as best he could, absorbing the technique of crane management, but when they arrived before No. 2 he turned his attention to Tom.

Some two hours before, Tom had closed his furnace doors on a new charge and slumped down on his bench, and he had scarcely moved since. His second helper had taken care of the job of changing drafts at the necessary intervals, but had long ago found another place to do his loafing. Just before the hot metal came up—fifty tons of molten pig-iron from the blast-furnace by way of the five-hundred-ton mixer at the rear of the floor—they had set up the trough through which the metal would be poured, but had done it in the mechanical, half-hearted way of men who associate by necessity.

Using a jib crane that was anchored to one corner of the furnace, they hoisted the inner end of the heavy steel-bound gutter faced with brick and plastered with fire clay, and thrust it into the furnace. Then they hoisted the outer end, shifting the cable with its grips and elevating it with the hand windlass so that a trestle of steel bars could be placed beneath it.

They did not remove the cable, however, leaving it as additional support in case the trestle gave way. There they left it, spanning the narrow-gage tracks on which the dinky brought in its trains of charging-boxes, and returned to their bench in silence.

Ordinarily there would have been a few loafers hanging around Tom's bench and

its neighboring water-tank when the ladle came up, but he had shut them off long before. Not that there is anything extraordinary about adding hot metal; it is done many times a day; but even steel-makers are diverted by some activity in which they are not required to take part. So the only witnesses of this bit of routine were Runt, who stood between Tom's bench and the ladle that was jockeying for position, and Jock, who remained inside his office and whose interest was directed solely toward the actions of the boy.

"What ya runnin' this time?" asked Runt, and sidled a little closer to the bench.

No answer from Tom. He stared straight ahead of him.

The ladle was spotted correctly, and began to sink closer to the waiting trough. The cable that rose from an eye at the bottom of the enormous bucket to a motor on the supporting bridge began to tighten and the ladle tipped forward on its trunnion. The glow from the fifty tons of soup tinted the girders of the crane with rose; the blast of incandescence from the open door of the furnace spot-lighted the trough and its supports as the ladle bowed. A splash of slag dripped from its lip, followed by a tiny trickle of metal. The aim was correct to the inch.

"Good craneman, ain't he?" Runt was trying another tack into the graces of the silent man.

A river of metal followed the trickle, hissing down into the trough thence into the furnace. For all the attention Tom paid to it, it might have been at the other end of the floor. He sat and—waited. But he did not wait much longer, for it happened.

Perhaps it was carelessness due to his fatalistic mood, perhaps it was just one of those unavoidable things. There was a dull pop, a slipping jerk, and the trestle collapsed beneath the trough. Then carelessness did show up, for the cable from the jib crane should have taken up the supporting job. Instead, it paid out with a run and the trough dropped, diverting the river of fire in the wrong direction—out on the floor. Some one had not thrown over the ratchet on the crane windlass—and that was the fault of Tom Gantry.

In a split second there was a puddle of hot metal flooding the floor, and before the craneman could loosen up on his lifting cable and level the tipped ladle, it was flowing like a river between the piles of material that littered the space between the charging-machine tracks. Jock came out of his office like a cannon-ball.

"Git on to that jib windlass!" he bawled. "Hoist yer trough!"

Then Tom Gantry spoke. Spoke without moving a muscle. He grinned in an I-told-you-so way, and "Can't do nothing," was all he said. He quit a few minutes later; quit and fled before a crazy mob could get him.

But there was one who had already leaped into action. It was Runt, and he was on his way before Jock got out of his office. He literally flew through the air—away from the safety of the bench and the tank—leaping from the top of one pile to the next one, crossing the streams of metal that raised flickering tongues in the valleys between. Straight across the first creek he soared, then the next, into the heart of the searing heat.

"Git back!" bellowed Jock. "Jump in the tank!"

But Runt ignored him. He stood on the last pile and saw a six-foot river shutting him off from that windlass. His clothes were smoking in the awful heat, but he was too intent upon crossing the gulf to notice that. The stream was not deep. It did not cover the rails of the narrow-gage track that lay close before the furnace. He leaped and his foot touched the furthermost rail, his shoes smoking instantly; he sprang again, and stood upon a tiny island of litter just beneath the windlass. Such a tiny island, unstable and crumbling into the stream from hell!

Only the frenzy of his devotion to steel could have given him the strength to whirl that wheel. Only the fury of service could have dulled him to the roasting proximity of the liquid fire at his feet. It was not until the cable was tight and the trough lifted to its proper position that Runt was aware of the hot metal almost at his shoes. His clothing was already smoldering; aflame in places, the tiny hillock of dust was crumbling rapidly beneath his feet. He could not jump back to safety for there was nothing to jump from.

There he stood when Jock arrived. He had stopped to obey his own command; had thrown himself bodily into the water-tank, but even so his clothes smoldered as he reached out and took the Runt into his

hands. It was like grabbing a torch, a flambeau of sacrifice with brown eyes steady and a smile on quivering lips, as he raised his arms, child-like, to Jock's grasp. One swoop and the boy was lifted out of the hell that surrounded, a dash to the tank and he was plunged into the water, head and all. When he came out again those eyes were closed. Thank God, he was unconscious!

In no time at all the whole open hearth was there, a close-packed ring of anxious men. Where was the doctor? Why didn't he come? He had been summoned. Doc could shoot the boy full of dope so that he would never know that terrible pain.

Jock rocked the boy in his arms like a baby while his eyes misted with water not from the tank. Sweet Mullin cursed horribly. Barney, the last to arrive, plowed through the crowd with his lungs sobbing for breath after his long run—and stopped in mid-gasp at what he saw. The doctor came and used his needle at last. Then Runt opened his eyes. No pain in them, thank God!

"Is it fixed?" he whispered.

The crowd shuffled closer. Silence. Not a breath was drawn. Jock could only nod down into the eyes that looked up at him. Those courageous eyes!

"Am I burnt bad?"

Now Jock had to talk! He sucked in a great breath and forced a sound past choking throat muscles.

"No, just scorched a little."

His voice was far too loud. It echoed.

"'Hot metal charged?"

"Sure, hot metal's all charged." A lie, but—

"Tha-a-t's good."

It was a sigh, not words, but Jock heard it, and so did the farthermost man in that breathless circle. Runt's eyelids fluttered. He forced them open again, sprung them into a stare like that of a sleepy child. He turned his head a little, and Jock's intuition told him what was wanted. He turned slowly around so that Runt could look into the contorted faces of his friends.

"An' when I come back we'll bust the record, won't we?"

A ring of nodding heads, but no words. Those hard-boiled steel-fighters were taking a mighty oath and they knew it.

"We will bust it, won't we?" insisted Runt, and this time he looked up into the agony of Jock's eyes.

"That we will, pet," Jock managed. "An' we'll have ye on a crane, too!"

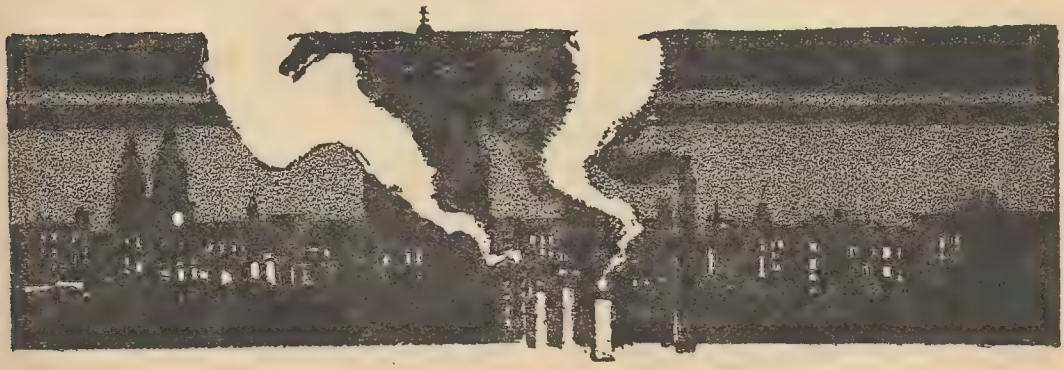
Runt nodded his head, sleepily.

"A crane," he said, then, in a voice that was so low that Jock had to bend his grizzled head close to the bravely smiling lips, "Tell 'em to go back to work. I'm all right."

Jock summoned his breath for a mighty effort and poured into the circle of receptive ears the undying spirit that pulsed in the tiny form he held, the battle cry restored by service:

"Git back to yer furnaces, ye steel-sloggin' scuts! We're after a record this month!"

And when he looked down at the suddenly heavy burden in his arms he saw a smile of great content upon the whitening lips.



Chevrons

A Five-Part Story—Part I

by LEONARD H. NASON

Author of "Burial," "Souvenirs," etc.

CHAPTER I

HUNGRY MEN AT VAUCOULEURS

TWO MEN sat by a roadside in attitudes of deep dejection. Their faces were white and their eyes haggard. They were clothed in uniforms of faded olive drab, with blouse and breeches that did not match, with glaringly new shoes, and ridiculous, shapeless caps. Both men had full packs, and one carried rifle and bayonet. A mounted patrol of Military Police had passed that way a short time before, but one keen glance at the two men had satisfied the police. Those faded uniforms, neatly patched here and there, and with buttons that were not mates, were salvage uniforms taken from wounded men—cleaned, repaired, and issued out again to men leaving the military hospital. The white faces, the new shoes, the over-full packs and the second-hand clothes were old features to the police. They meant that the wearers were wounded men who, discharged from hospital and sick to death of the monotony, the hideous quarters and the frightful food of the replacement camps, had slung their packs on their backs and, selecting a night when the guards would be under cover, had gone over the hill and were trying to rejoin their organizations. As long as these men had their faces turned toward the front, and as long as they behaved themselves, the police would not bother them.

One of the men looked behind him, at the way the two had come. A white road, baking under the hot sun of early September, went up and down over the hills and so out of sight. He looked the other way, toward the opposite horizon. The road looped its way, shimmering in the heat, an equal distance. Between the two horizons were trees, newly mowed fields and clumps of bush, but no other living thing.

"Sergeant," said the man, "you sure we're on the right road?"

The other man turned on his side to get his hand into his breeches pocket. He had a sergeant's stripes sewed rather askew on one sleeve, and a rusty-looking gold V on his right cuff showed that he had been wounded in action. He drew out a creased and dirty envelope and extracted a sheet of thin paper therefrom. The typewritten paper began:

Sergeant Robert Eadie,
Base Hospital 23, Vittel, Vosges.
Dear Sergeant:
The regiment will be at Vaucouleurs until Sept. 12. It is hoped that you can rejoin us there.

There was an indistinguishable scrawl and the typewritten words, "Personnel Officer, 79th F.A." On the strength of this thin sheet of paper these two men had traveled across France.

The sergeant got stiffly to his feet and inspected a mile-post near where the two had sat down.

"Yep, Darcy," said he, "Vaucouleurs, 7 kilos, it says. Well, we're half way. That's cheering."

"Oh ——!" said the other man, "is that all we are?"

"Only about four miles more," said the sergeant comfortingly. He looked at his watch. "It's twelve o'clock," he added. "Now if we should hustle even, we wouldn't get in in time for chow. Well, they'll have something they can give us for a handout. Even cold beans would do. Let's see, today's Sunday. They might have a good dinner. I remember once we had a chicken dinner on Sunday. Remember, Darcy, at Cokydawn? Well, let's start out anyway."

Darcy likewise got to his feet and stamped about a minute or two.

"This rifle is breakin' my shoulder," said he. "When we was ridin' in the train I didn't mind, but since we had to take to our feet it's near killin' me. What the —— an artilleryman does with a rifle, I don't know."

"Drop it in the road," said the sergeant.

"It's charged to me," said Darcy sadly.

"Charged to you!" cried the sergeant. "How do they know at the outfit that it's charged to you? Leave it against the tree and I'll be a witness that you never were issued one."

"I dursn't," said Darcy. "They might write from the replacement camp. I'm liable to get a blind that'll take the rest o' my life to pay for goin' over the hill and I don't want to have to pay for no rifle on the top of it. I've found stuff on my payroll before now. I lost a bed sack once. I ain't kiddin', Sergeant, the price that thing cost, you'd think it was embroidered with diamonds! No, I'll hang on to the rifle."

The two started out, Darcy shouldering his rifle bravely. They went down the hills and clambered up the other side. The heat grew, and the straps of their packs cut deeply. The road was never level; it went always up or down. Walking downhill gave them a rest, but they were doubly exhausted in climbing the opposite slope. They sat down often, for they were hot, they were thirsty and their new shoes hurt. The sergeant felt that strange weakness, that washed-out feeling in the legs that comes from a stay in hospital. Each hill they climbed they expected to see the roofs of Vaucouleurs before them, but when they had panted up to the top, and looked despairingly around, they could see nothing but more hills and the white road glimmering over the crests.

"Cheer up," said the sergeant at last, after Darcy had cast himself full length on the dusty grass and buried his face in his hands. "We only got two more kilos to go and I bet from the top of the next hill we can see the town. Maybe the outfit is camped outside the town on our side of it. We'll be back with it in another half hour, and then that will be the end of eating handouts of cold goldfish and of running around France. No more hoppin' trains, no more sleeping on station benches, no more ducking the police, no more. 'Naw, we ain't got enough to feed our own gang!' "

"Good," said Darcy, sitting up. "I'm glad we're gettin' there. I'm about outta gas. Do you really think maybe they'd have somethin' left from dinner?"

"Sure," said the sergeant, "I know Capodanno. If he hasn't been turned to duty for lapping up all the lemon extract, he'll have something to eat. The Old Man is always mooching around the kitchen for a lunch and Cap keeps ham and sardines and cold meat and stuff to give him. The Government sure loses money on feeding our Old Man. They ought to charge him double. Well, let's stir our stumps."

"Come on," said Darcy, "let's get it over with."

He leaped to his feet and the two started off. The heat of the road burned through their hobnails, the glare of the sun from the white chalk surface made their eyes sting, but the next hill was the last, and over it was their home, their battery, their friends, and food. They bravely breasted the ascent, the stones slipped under their feet and sweat poured down their faces, but they kept on. Sergeant Eadie shifted his pack and, putting his hands under the bottom of it, lifted it so that the straps would not cut his shoulders so. The summit of the hill drew nearer.

"What'll you bet we can see the camp from the top?" asked Eadie.

"It'll be the gladdest sight I ever seen," replied the other.

They reached the top, took two or three paces, and sure enough, at the bottom of the next slope, though quite a distance yet down the valley, rose the moss-covered roofs, the weather-beaten gray walls, and the high church towers of a town of considerable size. The men could see soldiers moving about, and half way down the slope was an aviation camp, with huge canvas tents for hangars.

"That's us," said the sergeant, "that's Vaucouleurs."

The two marched forward almost briskly, without taking their customary rest. As they descended the slope they passed more and more soldiers, but they saw no familiar faces, nor did they see anything that looked like a camp of field artillery.

"It would probably be in the woods somewhere," said Eadie, "on account of air raids. We wouldn't be able to see it from the road anyway."

They entered the town, following a street bordered by a stone wall. They looked sharply into the houses on the opposite side, searching for a place where liquid refreshment was sold.

"If we can only find a barroom," said Darcy, "there'll be some of our gang in it."

Ah, but it's dinner time," said Eadie. "Maybe they haven't left camp yet. You know what a gang they are for lying around and chewing the fat after meals."

"Why don't yuh ask a M.P.?" suggested Darcy. "This looks to be quite a town and we might go right past the road to our camp."

"I'll do it," said Eadie. "He won't say anything about pass. A man doesn't need a pass to take a walk on a Sunday in the town his outfit is stationed in."

There was an M.P. talking to a girl a few houses down the street and the two went toward him.

"Hey, soldier," said Eadie, moving up to the M.P. sidewise, so that both his sergeant's chevrons and wound stripe could be seen, "can you tell us where the 79th Field Artillery hangs out?"

The M.P. turned majestically from his conversation with the girl. He bent lowering brows upon the two. Could they not see he was busy? Darcy shifted his weight uncomfortably. If this bird asked them for a pass now—

"The what?" asked the M.P.

"The 79th Field," answered the sergeant.

"I never heard of 'em," said the M.P.

"Well, this is the Third Division headquarters, isn't it?" asked Eadie.

"Search me," said the M.P. "They come an' go. I don't keep track of 'em." He turned and continued his conversation with the girl.

"*Er-voo*," said he, "*hweet heures, ici.*"

The two soldiers in full pack moved sadly away.

"Don't let's get excited," said Eadie, "because these M.P.s never know their right hand from their left. The next guy I see I'm going to ask where the division P.C. is and then we'll go there and find out where our outfit is."

"Here comes a guy," cried Darcy suddenly, "an' he's got a 4 on his collar. He's outta the Fourth Infantry. Hey, guy, where at's the division P.C.?"

The other man did not stop in his stride.

"Yuh come by it," he called. "Go back and take the second street to your right."

THE two turned around and, hitching their packs to a more comfortable position, dragged their feet back along the way they had come, past the house where they had seen the date-making M.P., to the second street on their right, down which they turned.

"It's kind of a hard job," remarked Eadie, "to find an outfit in a divisional area. There are close to thirty thousand men in a division. That would populate quite a town back home."

"There's the P.C.," said Darcy cheerfully. "I can see an auto outside of it."

The two walked forward with more spring in their gait than formerly, though Eadie had a sinking feeling about the heart. Automobiles with Army numbers were quite common. The car stood indeed before the P.C., for there was a sign that said so.

HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION
U. S. ARMY
KEEP GATE CLEAR

The two soldiers went in, one hundred and twenty steps to the minute, full pack and all.

In the hall of the house sat an officer smoking a cigar and fanning himself with a newspaper. He looked calmly at the two soldiers who came to a halt before him, banged their heels and saluted.

"Sir," said Eadie, "could the captain tell us where the 79th Field Artillery camp is?"

"The 79th," repeated the officer, still looking curiously at the two, "Hmmm! Oh, Claflin," he called.

There was the stir of a chair being pushed back in one of the rooms and another officer entered. He clanked his spurs, a little chain he wore on his wrist jingled. This officer twisted his tiny mustache and looked very sternly at the two soldiers.

"The 79th," said he in a judicial tone, "what division are they with?"

Eadie's heart fell suddenly to his boots as a stone falls down a well. Darcy's rifle butt rattled on the floor. These two men were tired, they were hungry, they had battled their way from one corner of France to the other, pinning their hope on that one letter from the personnel officer, and now that they had arrived at their destination, it began to look as if they were as far from their regiment as they had been in the replacement camp. In addition, they had made a fourteen kilometer hike in the blazing heat and on empty stomachs, and trifles assume very serious proportions after such exertion. Then Eadie heard the other officer, the captain, speaking.

"No, no, Lieutenant," said the captain, and there was something of reproach in his tone, "the 79th is in this division. Don't you know where their mail goes?"

"I leave all that to Sergeant Pappas," replied the lieutenant. "He must be around here. I saw him myself not five minutes ago. These men want to get back to their outfit, don't you? Sure you do."

The lieutenant clanked away, and the men in the hall heard the far-away hum of a buzzer.

"Hot walking?" asked the captain, blowing cigar smoke.

Before the men could answer a sergeant hurried in, buttoning his blouse. He made for the door at the end of the hall through which the lieutenant had gone, but the captain called to him.

"Oh, Sergeant, where is the 79th?"

"The 79th, sir?" The sergeant consulted a book that he drew from his pocket. "They're up in the woods the other side of Toul."

"Who told you they were at Vaucouleurs?" asked the captain, turning to Eadie.

"We have a letter that they'd be at Vaucouleurs until the twelfth of September."

"They've been gone about ten days, sir," said Sergeant Pappas.

"We're all moving up," added the captain. "If you'd come in tomorrow at this time you wouldn't even find the headquarters here. We're moving to Toul. I wonder how I can get you men back. There's not much doing today because it's Sunday you see. Come back tomorrow and we'll see if we can't give you a ride as far as Toul."

"Thank you, sir," said Eadie.

He and Darcy saluted and went out of the door into the hot street again. They went down it aimlessly, for they had nowhere in particular to go and neither wanted to be the first to sit down. When they came to the railroad track, Eadie halted.

"Darcy," said he, "throw that —— rifle away."

"I dursn't," said Darcy. "These here things cost money, I ain't kiddin' yuh, an' by the time I paid my insurance an' my allotment an' the blind for losin' govmunt property, an' paid for the rifle, too, I wouldn't have much left. Well, Sergeant, what do you think? Do we wait till tomorrow or not?"

"Let's get ourselves a feed first," said Eadie. "It's hard enough to think on an empty stomach. Don't let's forget that you and I are soldiers of the United States Army, entitled to three meals a day, a bed, and medical attendance free of charge. Let's go claim our rights. I'm going back to the division and let out a howl for chow."

"They'll tell us to come back at supper time," said Darcy.

"Well, we don't want to wander around this hole in the ground in the heat looking for food," said Eadie, "and we're liable to strike some hospitable place like we did at Saint-Dizier where they don't feed unless you produce travel orders. Maybe there's a Red Cross round here, but those girls have begun to get hard-boiled now and—"

"Listen!" interrupted Darcy.

From behind a door in the wall at their back came a sudden sharp sound, a rending crack. Again the sound was repeated, again and again. There came a crash of tinware and a husky voice singing:

> "Don't send her away, John, don't send her away
> For she has come back to comfort us, John,
> Now that we're old and gray."

"There's some one in there choppin' wood," said Darcy. "What'll yuh bet it's a kitchen?"

Eadie cautiously pushed open the door in the wall. Within was a court-yard, shaded on three sides by sheds.

Under one of these sheds was a long table, and spoons, cleavers, egg-beaters, long forks and other instruments peculiar to kitchens hung in rows from the beams. There was a stove in there, not a rolling kitchen, but a real field range, large and

capable-looking. Beside it a fat man with his apron rolled up about his waist split wood and hummed a song. As the two entered, the fat man straightened his back, searched beneath his apron, and finding a cigar, bit the end off it and then proceeded to light it. As he blew out the first cloud of smoke, his eye lighted on the two newcomers.

"Hi, fellars," said he pleasantly, "been hikin' this afternoon?"

"I'll say we have," said Eadie. "We hiked in from the main line. It was a hot walk. You the cook?"

"I'm the cook," said the fat man. "Maybe you never seen a cook splittin' his own wood. Well, I split mine. This here is corps headquarters mess an' the K.P. is prisoners. They bring 'em over in the mornin' an' leave 'em all day, but bein' it's Sunday they gets the afternoon off an' can walk all over the stockade. That leaves me without no help from dinner until morning. The detail comes over an' washes everything up the first thing Monday morning. So I gotta split my own wood in the heat. My back aint none too strong anyways."

"I suppose they feed well here," remarked Eadie.

"Feed well? Huh!" The cook spat out a little piece of cigar and sitting down on a box, took his knee in both hands and leaned back comfortably. "For dinner today we had duck, roast duck stuffed with chestnuts. Man, it was good! And where did we get it, says you? Well, we bought it off the frogs. They all got stuff to sell. Ducks and geese and eggs and milk and all kinds o' stuff. An' the officers I feeds got the jack to buy it with, d'yuh see? Duck an' champagne. It goes good. An' what champagne is left, the waiters splits with me. An' if they don't, they —— soon gets relieved off the detail."

"Is that steak I see there?" asked Darcy.

"That's for tonight," said the cook. "Steak an' French fries. We eats light of a Sunday night."

He puffed at his cigar.

Eadie shifted his weight from one sore foot to the other and looked at the steaks hung in the shade, with some big leaves over them to keep the flies off. Roast duck, champagne, chestnuts, steaks! He knew now what it meant to water at the mouth. He could have wept. He tried to think when he and Darcy had eaten last. At Saint-Dizier, at Condrecourt? No, at Ligny. At Ligny, the afternoon of the day before, they had stolen a can of hash from the compartment of a passing troop train. Eadie looked at the field range, the wood, and the ax beside it.

"How come you have to split wood this time of day?" he asked.

"Well," said the cook, "some Britishers and frogs come over to call sometimes of a Sunday afternoon and the officers here serves 'em a drop of tea. I get a little extra for makin' it an' fixin' up toast an' stuff. They wont give me no prisoners of a Sunday so I do it myself."

"We haven't had a thing to eat," began Eadie, "since yesterday afternoon. And with the walk we had this morning we've got quite an appetite. We were wondering what the chances might be on a little handout."

"Well," said the cook.

He leaned forward, elbows on knees, removed his cigar and regarded the end of it.

"Hmmm," said he.

His eye wandered to the wood and the ax, and then back to Eadie and Darcy. Again Eadie regarded the wood. He also looked with a bold full glance at those thick red steaks, ready for the frying, peeping coyly from under their green leaves.

"If you'd like to give us a bite," said Eadie, "we wouldn't mind chopping a little wood for you."

"Good," said the cook heartily, "that's fine. Sure, I'll give you fellars a feed. I wouldn't never turn no man away hungry, not if I had to give him my rations myself. There's the wood. Grab the ax and turn to. Take off your packs, fellars, an' make yourselves comfortable."

Eadie and Darcy removed their packs and their blouses and took turns at the wood. It was tough, green stuff, and the ax was none too sharp. Eadie chopped until his back ached and he could no longer see because of the sweat running into his eyes, and then Darcy took hold.

"Well, cook, what do you say?" asked Eadie after awhile, "how much wood do you want? Isn't that enough?"

There was a strong fragrance of lemon in the air. The cook had a tin cup in his hand, into which he gazed, moving the cup in small circles to stir its contents. He drank long and gurglingly.

"Ah," said the cook, smacking his lips,

"what would a job o' cookin' be without lemon extract?"

"How about the wood?" cried the sergeant. "Isn't that enough?"

The cook rolled a red eye at the pile of chopped wood.

"Oh, no," said he, "why that wouldn't boil a cup o' water. I've got to have more than that."

"You're crazier'n ——," panted Darcy, "why there's enough wood there to bake bread for a battalion!"

"Naw, there ain't," said the cook. He inhaled noisily some of the contents of the cup. "Why, I cut more than that myself!"

"We're just out of hospital," said Eadie, "and wood-cutting isn't in our line. What do you have to do to make tea but boil a little water?"

"I gotta cook supper, too," said the cook, "an' all that steak to fry. Go on, there's two of yuh. Cut us a little more wood an' I'll give yuh a nice feed."

Eadie took the ax from Darcy and went at the wood again. When his hands felt as if they had been fried and he could see the white heads of blisters beginning to show, he handed the ax to Darcy. Every muscle in his back ached and his head swam from the heat, but he thought of the steaks about to be fried and decided it was worth it. He needed something to bolster his courage and there was nothing like a steak to give a man heart.

"Whaddyuh say?" called Darcy, breathing heavily. "That enough?"

He pointed to a really sizable pile of wood. The cook looked at it grudgingly, and chewed upon the butt of his cigar.

"Yeh, that's enough," he said.

Darcy at once dropped the ax, and he and Eadie withdrew to the shade of the shed-roof.

"How long do you suppose it'll take him to cook it?" asked Darcy.

"Not long. Steak doesn't take a minute to fry up. I just happened to think he may have some of that duck left over."

"Duck?" cried Darcy and said no more. The vision of eating duck had removed his power of speech.

The cook had opened a huge box and was rattling therein. He drew out a loaf of bread and cut slices from it. Again his head and shoulders disappeared in the box and more rattling ensued. Eadie decided that the cook was getting out gridirons, forks, and other tools for the proper preparation of steak. The cook put something before him on the table and reached overhead for a cleaver. There was the sound of two sharp blows and the cook came over to the two men.

"Here, fellars," said he, "dig in."

In one hand he extended two slices of bread and in the other a small round object, a tin can with a red label, the top opened in a jagged triangle. Eadie took the can in stupefied amazement and looked into it. There was a mysterious mass of red and black therein, with bits of white bones and pieces of vertebra sticking out.

"What the —— is this?" asked Eadie in a choking voice.

"Canned sammun," said the cook.

"But you're goin' to cook us a steak, too, aren't you?" Eadie tried to wrench his mouth into a grin, but was unsuccessful. Beside him Darcy still inspected the dry bread, turning it over and over as if he expected to find butter or jam on it somewhere.

"Cook a steak?" cried the cook. "Them steaks is for officers. I ain't puttin' out steaks to every bum that comes moochin' a handout. Here I give you a good feed of bread an' sammun an' you want steak, too. If you don't want that sammun, give it back to me an' get the —— out of my kitchen!"

EADIE drew back his hand and hurled the can of salmon with all his might into the cook's chest.

"Take your —— goldfish!" said he.

The cook staggered back a step and Darcy, leaping past Eadie, planted his fist on the cook's jaw. The cook went down with a thud. It is not considered the act of a gentleman to hit a man when he is down, much less kick him, yet it was Sergeant Eadie's foot that thumped against the prostrate cook's ribs. It was Darcy, however, who mounted upon the cook's frame and did a little double-time thereon with his hobnails. The cook began to bellow.

"Give me that goldfish, Darcy," said Eadie calmly. He reached out and took the can and, as the cook struggled to his feet, calmly knocked him down again. "It's Sunday," said the sergeant, "and there aren't many people around. Hold his hands, Darcy."

Eadie thereupon sat astride the cook's chest and while Darcy held the other's hands, Eadie gagged the cook with a few handfuls of goldfish, and then proceeded to rub the rest of the contents of the can into the cook's hair, eyes and ears. This was quite painful, for Army goldfish was full of bones, quite sharp and strong. The cook writhed. He made gurgling sounds. Though he had been taken by surprize, the cook was no weakling and he succeeded in wrenching his hands free from Darcy at last.

"Let's be going," said the sergeant, evading a wild grab for his face by one of the cook's waving hands. Eadie realized that he and Darcy were weak from hospital and that their strength was furthermore undermined by lack of food, so that once the cook got free he might make it interesting for them. Moreover, they might be taken by the police. The cook got to his feet, and wheezing and choking, coughed goldfish from his throat and dug it out of his eyes and ears. At last he could see and speak. A prolonged howl for help was his first act. Then he made for the table and seized a cleaver. Again he yelled and looked about for his antagonists. They had disappeared.

"——," gasped the cook, "they can't get outta town."

He started for the house at the end of the court at a staggering run.

In the street on the other side of the wall, Eadie and Darcy ran heavily along, carrying their packs in one hand and their blouses in the other.

"Stop a minute," panted Darcy. "I can't carry this rifle an' pack both. T'—— with the rifle like you told me to. If we get caught we'll get hung anyways."

He cast the rifle from him and then he and the sergeant went on again. They turned down a street that led between garden walls, a back alley, unpaved. They stopped and listened, holding their gasping breaths. There was a distant clamor, a far-off howling, in the intervals of which the two could distinguish the words,

"Thieves! Hey, crooks! M. P.'s up!"

"It's the cook," said Eddie, grinning. "Thank ——, it's Sunday. He won't raise much of a crowd. Let's put on our blouses and packs. We're honest citizens. Now, if any one wants to know what the row is about, we don't know."

"Let's get outta town," said Darcy. "I feel nervous here. We want to go to Toul, don't we? Well, let's find the road."

"How's your courage?" asked Eadie.

"Good. Man, I feel better after passin' that bird a beatin'. The idea o' him puttin' out goldfish to a coupla wounded guys back from hospital! I can do a heap o' walkin' to save myself a month or so on the rock pile."

They continued down the street to its end, and into the highroad that crossed there. There were some soldiers idling at the far end of the road; there was a restaurant with more soldiers sitting before it, but none of them showed any interest in the two strangers. Eadie went boldly up to one of the tables.

"Which is the road to Toul, fellars?" he asked.

"Huh?" said the man, "the road to Toul? Hey, Tommy, ask one o' them despatch riders which is the road to Toul."

"Down the other side o' the town," called some one from the interior of the restaurant. "It goes out by the M. P. barracks."

"Sure, that's right," said several, "it goes out the east side of the town. You can't miss it."

"How far is it?" asked Eadie.

"How far is it, Tommy?"

"Twenty-five kilometers," answered the invisible Tommy.

Eadie's heart sank. They could never make it before night. Twenty-five kilometers meant about fifteen miles, more than a day's march for him and his tired companion. He and Darcy went slowly away. They walked down a seemingly endless paved street, came to the thickly populated part of the town and then made a circle to the east, to try to come on the road to Toul outside the town. They had no desire to pass the police barracks. They came out on the edge of a meadow, on the far side of which was a long row of trees, stretching away out of sight to the northeast.

"I'll bet that's the road," said Eadie, "it looks like a main road and it goes in the right direction."

They crossed the hot field, mopping their brows, and at last arrived at the edge of the road. They could see at one end the last houses of the town, but the other, far, far away, simply narrowed down to a point and disappeared. It was going to be a tremendous effort to walk any farther that day, and the barren fields offered little inducement to linger in the vicinity. The two

men sat down on their packs and looked sadly at their new shoes. These shoes were not yet broken in and hence made their feet sore.

"We're getting closer all the time," said Eadie. "We're bound to find the outfit some day."

"Yeh, some day," agreed Darcy. "When we were three or four hundred miles from the outfit it didn't seem half as far off as it does now when we ain't but ten or twelve."

Eadie stood up and looked about for a mile-post. These posts were really kilometer posts, being placed on the French highways every kilometer, and giving the distance to the nearest towns and the number of the highway. Eadie remembered sadly that if this was indeed the road to Toul and that if there was a town between him and that city, the post would give the distance to the next town and say nothing about Toul, so that Eadie, having no map, would not be any better off than before.

"Here comes a motorcycle guy," called Darcy. "We can ask him."

He pointed to a cloud of dust approaching from the direction of the town, in front of which could be seen the thin shape of a motorcycle with its rider.

The motorcycle approached, slowed down, and as Darcy stood up to hail its rider, the machine stopped. The rider wheeled it to the side of the road, and kicked its stand into place with a sweep of his foot. The rider of the machine was a large, husky soldier; a very capable-looking gun swung from his hip, and his arm bore the blue brassard with two white letters, large and glaring—M. P.

"O misery!" muttered Eadie.

The halting of this policeman boded the wanderers no good. It would mean a request to be shown the authority for their wandering at large, and like Simple Simon, indeed they had not any. The Military Policeman approached.

"Are you the two guys that beat up the cook?" asked he.

"What cook?" countered Eadie.

The M. P. grinned.

"I ain't askin' officially," said he, "but just as one guy to another. That bird has been sufferin' for a rubbin' down for some time. Come clean, now, ain't you two the ones that slipped it to him? You answer the description—two tough guys, salvage uniforms, phony wound stripe, toughest one a sergeant."

"Well," said Eadie, "we had a few words with a guy back there. I don't know about his being a cook."

"He's a cook, all right," said the M. P. "He cooks for the big two-star boys that hang around corps headquarters. Any other cook you could beat up an' nothin' said, but you go banging around the kitchen-pet of one o' these here generals, an' there's a wild cry out for yuh. Have a cigaret?"

"Thanks," said Eadie.

He and Darcy took the proffered cigarets, tailor-mades, too, and lighted them in silence. What did all this apparent friendliness on the part of the M. P. portend?

"Well," said the M. P., "I'm out lookin' for yuh an' givin' the glad news to every patrol we got out. You better dust outta this area. I ain't kiddin'. Tell me, is it true yuh knocked him down and kicked the liver out of him?"

"Somethin' like that," said Darcy. "He got us to chop up a cord o' wood an' said he'd give us a feed for it an' then he issued out a can o' goldfish."

"That's him," said the M. P. "He used to cook for our detail. Well, he got promoted to be cook for the corps mess an' we got all set to live off the fat o' the land. Why, we give him a blow-out the night he left that set us back near a month's pay apiece. So then about a week later, when he'd never come near us, a couple of us went up to pay him a call. He was sittin' in the shed, pickin' away at what was left of a roast suckin' pig. Well, in two words, he didn't offer us none an' we asked for it, an' maybe said some hard words. What does he do but turn us in for botherin' him an' hangin' round his kitchen! An' on the charge sheet is endorsed by old Turkeyface himself, 'Severe sentence.' We're still payin' the blind. By ——!" cried the M. P., "lemme shake hands with you guys! He said you broke every bone in his body almost."

He shook hands violently with Darcy and Eadie.

"Now then," said he, "you wanta get away from here. Listen, now, there's a ration truck goin' up to Toul in about ten minutes. I saw it loadin' when I come out. I'll curve back to town an' tell 'em to be on the lookout for yuh. Jump in an' stay outta sight. No one'll look for yuh in Toul.

You could stay in Vaucouleurs till —— froze before any of our guys would bother yuh, but there's too much rank behind that cook. We'd all get put on the honey cart an' that wouldn't help you nor us, either. Well, s' long. I'll go back an' fix it up with the truck driver to give yuh a ride an' then I'll be on my way again."

He mounted his motorcycle, swung it about, and was gone. In a little while he was back again and shouted encouragingly to them as he went by. A few minutes later a truck followed and came to a groaning halt as the two wanderers waved their arms at it.

"You two the guys that beat up the cook?" called the driver.

"That's us," answered Eadie.

"Well, get in the back," directed the driver, "an' holler when you're in."

The two boosted each other in over the tailgate, yelled to the driver and away they went.

"Well, can you tie that?" asked Darcy, when they were well under way, tucking his pack under him to ease the bouncing of the truck a little. "Every one in this country is our friend because we beat up the cook. He must have been mean as dogwood and twice as nasty."

"Boy," said Eadie, "when that M. P. shook hands with me I was more surprized than if Kaiser Bill himself had done it. Why, think of the drag he would have had with the general if he'd arrested the men that had banged the general's cook! I know one mess that will eat poor for a few weeks."

"Hey!" bellowed a voice from the front of the truck, "you birds hungry?"

"That's our middle name," answered Eadie. "We're always hungry."

"There's a case o' jam open and some bread in a bag there," yelled back the man. "Dig in."

The two opened the jam, helped themseves to a loaf of bread and ate heartily. The truck bounced over the road, its cargo of rations creaked and banged and the sideboards rattled merrily. Night fell, and it began to rain while they were still on the way.

"This is luck," said Eadie, "but you remember all the time that we've been on the way, just as everything looked the blackest, all of a sudden it all straightened out. Here we are, riding along in our own auto, a full belly and a dry skin. I'd hate to be under a haystack tonight."

"We ain't there yet," said Darcy. "This is too good to last."

"Well, let's enjoy it while it does," said Eadie.

The truck rattled on, the rain drove against the cover, they halted while the driver held conversation with unseen men, and they proceeded again. Traffic became thicker and Eadie could tell when they were at a crossroads by the free comment of the driver and his assistant and the faint yet bitter replies of unseen soldiers.

"We're gettin' near the front," said Darcy, peering out the back. "These trucks are all runnin' without lights." Hardly had he said this when the truck lurched violently several times and then came to a halt.

"Ditched!" decided Eadie. He waited for the driver to burst into profanity, but he heard them climbing down from their perch in silence. "What's the matter?" he asked as two dripping figures appeared at the tailgate.

"Nothin'," said one of them. "This is as far as we go."

"Is this Toul?" cried Eadie.

"Yep," replied the driver, climbing into the truck, "this is Toul."

"Do you suppose we could sleep in the truck tonight?" asked Eadie.

"Sure," said the driver, "there's room in here for a million."

He and his companion had bedding rolls like officers, which they unrolled on top of the load. Eadie and Darcy, however, had nothing but their blankets and overcoats. They put these down, and using their gas masks for pillows, wiggled around like snakes to find a place where they could lie and escape the sharp corners of the ration cases.

"I'll bet you a month's pay we find the outfit tomorrow," said Eadie.

"Huh!" replied the other.

In the front part of the truck cigarets glowed where the driver and his assistant were having their good-night smoke. They must have eaten their supper before they left Vaucouleurs, or else on the seat on the way up.

"Wasn't it lucky we got out of Vaucouleurs so smoothly," said Eadie.

"I bet I get a blind yet for throwin' my rifle away," remarked Darcy. "I could

have carried it a cinch in the truck. Maybe I can swipe another. They ought to be plenty around if they're all as heavy as mine. It was one o' them Enfields. They probably cost more than a Springfield—they're bigger. I wonder if the bayonet I got would fit a Springfield? Most like not. Will a Enfield bayonet fit a Springfield?"

Hearing no reply, Darcy turned upon his side.

"Hey, Sergeant," he said softly. Silence. "Ah, he's poundin' his ear already. Sergeants is great guys for sleepin'."

He rolled back, and in a minute or two was asleep himself.

CHAPTER II

FIELD ORDERS 36. VERY SECRET

IN THE morning rain still fell, bucketing down slantwise before a cold wind. The fall rains were beginning and the heavy heat of the day before had been a sure precursor of a spell of cold rain. The two wanderers looked sadly out of the truck. They were in the yard of a great caserne, a barrack square surrounded by high buildings, empty now and cheerless. A long line of trucks like their own were waiting to unload.

"Where do you go from here?" Eadie asked the driver.

"We unload an' go back to Vaucouleurs."

"Do they put out any breakfast here?"

"Nope, only what we had last night. Bread an' jam. There's some beans there if you want 'em. Some likes beans for breakfast."

"I can stand 'em," said Eadie. "If you spread 'em on bread they aren't bad. Well, we'll eat on you again if you don't mind an' then we'll drift. How far are we from the center of the town?"

"Not far. Drag yourselves down the main stem and across the railroad bridge and you'll see the town gate. What place do you want?"

"I don't know," said Eadie, "but I thought I'd go in and ask the billeting officer where the 79th Field Artillery is. Ever hear of 'em?"

"No," said the driver. "I never did. But there's ten million outfits around here. Black Jack himself never heard of half of 'em."

"Come on," called Eadie, "grab up your pack, Darcy, and we'll dust out of here."

"Can't we leave our packs here and come back for 'em?" asked Darcy. "My shoulders got cuts in 'em you could put your hand into, I ain't kiddin' yuh."

"Darcy, I'm surprized at you. A man of your service wanting to leave his pack loose. Man, we wouldn't be outside the gate before the pack would fade away. A snow-man in —— wouldn't disappear half so quick."

"Aw, what would these truck drivers want with our blankets an' extra shoes?" objected Darcy. "They got lots of their own."

"There's Algerians to sell them to, aren't there?" demanded the sergeant. "And another reason for taking them is that if we saw a quick chance to get away if we met a truck or something going up to the outfit, we wouldn't want to come back here for our packs. I can see the driver waiting for us while we did it."

"You win," said Darcy. "Us for where the town major hangs out."

They went across the yard and out the main gate of the caserne. There was a mirror there, a huge, full-length affair, so that the conscripts of other days could see how they looked when they strolled out on a Sunday afternoon. The two Americans did not pause before it. They took no pride in their appearance. Their hair was long, their hands and faces begrimed with coal dust from riding in trains, and road dust from pounding the highways. Their uniforms happily were covered by their slickers, which, put on over their packs, gave them a decidedly humpbacked appearance.

The two went down the hill, knowing that this must lead to the center of the town. They passed a great many French soldiers, a few Americans, and saw some Italian gendarmes clad in gray-green uniforms, with flowing capes and strange huge, cocked hats. They crossed the bridge above the railroad and so came to the old-fashioned city gate.

"Look at the M. P.," said Darcy in a whisper, indicating a man in a slicker who twirled a club under the porch of a sort of guard-house.

"Never mind him," replied Eadie under his breath, "keep right on going, just as though he didn't mean anything to you." The driving rain gave the two an excuse to keep their heads down and they proceeded stolidly through the gate.

"HEY!" yelled the M. P. The two

stopped. "Hey, where you guys goin'?"

"Down-town," said Eadie. "We want to find the billeting officer."

"Got a pass?"

"You don't need a pass to come from one barracks to another," countered Eadie boldly.

"Maybe not," said the M. P., "but you need one to get through this gate. Got one?"

"No," answered Eadie.

The M. P. waved his club in a gesture that said, "Outside, bum!" as plainly as if he had spoken it. The two turned without comment and retraced their steps. On the railroad bridge they halted by common consent and leaned against the railing.

"Don't it beat all!" said Darcy. "You an' me a coupla wounded guys tryin' to get back to the front. You'd think every one would give us a hand. But us! 'How's chances on a flop for the night?' 'Git t' —— outta here!' 'Hey, guy, where's the Third Division hang out?' 'Show me your pass an' I'll tell yuh.' 'Ain't got no pass.' 'Git t' —— outta here!' "

"They're all sore at us," said Eadie. "When I was in hospital I read an article in a magazine about how happy the boys were in France with their theaters, their games, their good wholesome food, their clean, well-kept hospitals, their healthy, happy life with one another, how friendly they all were. The article let on that the officers tucked us into bed and heard our prayers every night."

"Some of it *sounds* like prayin'," said Darcy. "No, I ain't seen a theayter since I was in France an' the only white woman that spoke to me was that Limey truck driver in Saint-Dizier. She stalled her car. 'Will ye give it a twist?' she says. So I give it a twist and just then a ambulance goes by and lets a shower o' mud go all over me an' the Limey girl, too. Boy, she said some words *I* never heard before. Man, that girl could speak, I ain't kiddin'."

"How's your courage?" asked Eadie suddenly.

"Good, why?"

"Game for a hike in the rain?"

"Sure, it's better than sittin' here bitin' our thumbs an' wonderin' when we eat."

"Well," said Eadie, "here comes a frog and I'm going to ask him where the front is."

A French soldier was walking briskly across the bridge and him Eadie hailed.

"Hey!" called Eadie. "Where's the front?"

The French soldier halted and waved a hand toward the scenery.

"Yes, yes, I know," said Eadie, "but how do we get there?"

"Ah," said the French soldier, waving his forefinger back and forth, "*pas bon!*"

"*Combien de kilometres?*" asked Eadie.

"Ah, twentee-five kilos," said the Frenchman.

"Oh ——," groaned Eadie, "this guy is going to show me he can speak English!"

"Two road," continued the other. He held two fingers before Eadie's eyes. "One over there. One, here. One over there, Bernecourt, one here, Boucq."

"What do you mean, one here?" asked Eadie.

"There," said the French soldier, still in English. "You turn there, by beeg tree, turn to our left hand," plainly indicating a right hand turn all the time, "and you come to front. Far, far, twentee-five kilos."

He waved both hands with fingers extended twice, and then waggled his right hand again.

"Thanks," said Eadie, "we know where the road is anyway."

"I thought you were a shark at French," remarked Darcy when the French soldier had departed.

"Oh, boy, they're dumb, these French," said Eadie bitterly. "I can speak just as good French almost as they can, but the minute they see my uniform they make up their minds they can't understand a word I say, or else they want to show me they can speak English. I'd be only too glad to speak English to them if I could understand what they said in it. And did you hear this boob? Me speaking perfectly good French to him, and him answering me in pidgin English?"

"Every one gets in a panic that way," said Darcy. "I mind when we was at Cokeydawn I give a Frog ten francs to leave me have his uniform and I went to Rennes in it. Well, I spent a month's pay in peace for once. But what I meant to say, a looey from the amminition train comes up to me about three A.M. and starts readin' stuff at me out of a little book. I was just drunk enough to answer in English. 'What does the lieutenant want?' says I. An' he reads some more about *Oo ay le gare, je voospree, monseer.* 'The gare I don't know about,' says

I, 'but anything else in Rennes you want to see I can tell you where it is.' He never got a word of what I said. He shuts up the book and goes off wavin' his hands."

"Maybe he had a few drinks under his belt, too," said Eadie. "Well, let's go again. I found out the way to the front and somewhere between here and Germany we ought to find an outfit that'll give two good soldiers a job until they find their own."

AT SUNSET of the same day the rain had ceased, but the sky was still lowering, the wind rustled the wet leaves and a chill cold damp was on all the countryside. Darcy and Eadie tramped through the mud. They had that day progressed twenty-two kilometers, riding in trucks, on empty caissons, bareback on horses that nearly clove them in two, in French country carts, and lastly on a tank. They had come to a thickly wooded section, into the depths of whose forests went narrow roads, new, and bearing the marks of much traffic.

"It's comin' on to get dark," said Darcy. "Would you mind tellin' a guy where you expect to flop in these wet woods?"

"When I smell a kitchen," said the sergeant, "then I quit. We're among regular troops. I just saw an ammunition cart that belongs to the Sixteenth Infantry. I have more hopes of them than of the other kind."

"We're gettin' closer to the front all the time," said Darcy, trying to shift his pack to a more comfortable position. "Kitchens an' everything will be hid in the woods. I think we ought to duck down one o' these roads—what the —— is bitin' you now?"

The sergeant had darted to one side of the road and was looking into the air with intense earnestness.

"What's the matter?" asked Darcy again.

"Come here," said Eadie, "and see if you see what I do."

Darcy complied and found the sergeant looking at a piece of new wood, half the top of a box in which canned goods had been packed, for the marks of the bottoms of the cans were still visible. On the wood, in straggling black letters, were the words, "79th F. A. Post of Command." Underneath an arrow pointed down one of the narrow roads.

"It ain't real," said Darcy. The two soldiers looked up the road into the woods. It curved away out of sight; it was muddy and ran through pools of water. Leaves, torn from the trees by the wind, lay scattered in it.

"Sure, it's real," said the sergeant. "We haven't had a drink for weeks. Our outfit's down this road, Darcy—what d'you think of that for luck?"

"I don't believe it," said Darcy firmly.

"Well, we'll go see."

The two of them splashed their way down the road. Beyond the first turn a confused murmur became audible and after another minute's walking, they could see a sort of park under the trees, wagons half covered with tarpaulins, a picket line, the horses tethered thereon kicking and squealing. Men moved about among the trees, not idly, but quickly and nervously, some even at a run. Eadie and Darcy turned in the direction of the picket line and discovered that the underbrush was thick with shelter tents.

"Well, if it ain't Sployd!" cried Darcy suddenly.

"Well, if it ain't Darcy an' Sergeant Eadie!" cried the man addressed as Sployd. "When did yuh get back? By ——, if you ain't more welcome than a month's pay!"

"Had supper yet?" asked the sergeant, wringing the other's hand.

"Sure, long ago," said Sployd. "I'm a busy man. I'll see you fellars in a second. There's the old gun crew, Darcy, wheelin' that gun outta line there. Most of the old gang is left. I'll see yuh in a minute."

"Where's the Old Man?" asked the sergeant, "we've got to report to him and then we'll see about chow."

"His tent's over there under that big tree," said Sployd, pointing. "Well, I gotta hurry away."

He shook hands again and hastily took his departure.

"Every one's in a rush," said Eadie. "They must be going to have an inspection. You go over and parley with the gun crew, Darcy, and I'll go to tell the Old Man his two prodigals have come home. It's not much later than five o'clock. They're rather early with chow."

"Tell the Old Man we haven't had anything since breakfast," said Darcy. "I'll see if I can't hit these *hombres* up for some chow."

"Good, I'll be back in a minute."

The sergeant gave a feeble brush or two at the mud on his slicker, hooked it together a little more neatly, and started in the direction of the big tree. Men hailed him gaily from time to time, all the old gang he had known on the Marne before he had been wounded, other men, whose faces were new to him, looked at him curiously. The sergeant paused at a shelter tent from which protruded a pair of feet in officer's boots. The sergeant coughed slightly and a face peered out.

"By ——!" cried the owner of the face, "it's Sergeant Eadie back again. Well, well. You always come back at the opportune moment. I'll bet the police are at your heels this time, too."

The boots scraped on the ground and their owner emerged, a tall man wearing the insignia of a captain of field artillery. He shook hands violently with Sergeant Eadie.

"Speak of the devil," continued the captain, "and he always appears. I was just this minute wishing you were here and thinking you were somewhere in hospital gold-bricking your time away. Yessir and be ——! I'm glad to see you. Have you got a gun?"

"Yes, sir," said Eadie, a little mystified.

"Got any bullets for it?"

"No, sir."

"Well, get some pronto. Hang a first aid packet on yourself, get a can of bully beef to put in your pocket, and drag yourself over to Lieutenant Sawyer. He's got the only other map of the sector. Commit it to memory, sergeant! Ah, boy! I'm glad you're back. I see my way clear now. Young Mack will figure fire dope and Finn can be liaison sergeant. Well, on your way now, snap! One hour is all you've got!"

"Sir," said Eadie, "I haven't had anything to eat all day. Could I wait on the map until after I've eaten?"

The captain's lips shut firmly and he turned a cold gaze upon the sergeant. The captain had blue eyes, as expressionless as the muzzle of a pistol and fully as alarming.

"We're starting a drive tonight, sergeant," said he. "The battery moves at 6 P.M."

"Ah," said the sergeant, "I see. Good. I'll get right at the map."

"Report to me when the battery moves out," directed the captain.

Eadie saluted and went away.

Out of sight of the big tree he removed his slicker, removed his pack, and drew and examined his pistol. It had been issued to him in the replacement camp and was new, still gummy with the cosmoline in which it had been stored. It would probably jam on him the first shot, thought Eadie. He would have to find some kerosene and clean it.

An hour! So many things to do! All of the weariness that he had fought against throughout the wet, muddy march since they had left Toul descended on him at once. His gas mask was new and would taste of sulphur. The eye pieces must be greased. A drive! Eadie knew what a drive meant. He had been in one on the Marne. It meant no food, no sleep for days on end, and fighting, fighting, all the time. It meant seeing men killed and lying down beside their unburied bodies to wait for the Boche to tire of shooting machine-guns and flares; it meant hunting infantry at night in black woods, alone. He must draw ammunition, lots of it! And he did not know a foot of the sector! Five minutes of the hour had already gone.

"Hi, Eadie, home again?" cried a voice. A man called Ham, who was a machine-gunner, extended his hand to Eadie. "What's that on your sleeve?" cried Ham.

"A wound stripe," said Eadie. "Don't you know what a wound stripe looks like?"

"Was you wounded?" grinned Ham. "I heard you went over the hill."

"I went over feet first," said Eadie. "I hear we're going to pull off a drive."

"Sure'n —— are," said Ham. "On Metz. Tough fight, gonna be. Well, I'm glad you come back all right, even if it does do me outta my new stripes."

"How come?"

"I just got made," said Ham sadly, displaying a sleeve with a brand new set of sergeant's chevrons, "but now you come back we'll have more sergeants than we're allowed an' me bein' dub, I'll probably get broke again."

"Not much chance," said Eadie. "I'll be the one. I don't know whether a man holds his stripes all the time he's gone or not."

"I guess he does," said Ham. "Anyway they won't bust *you*. You're rankest N. C. O. now. If Mulcahy gets a commission you'll be first sergeant. Well, I got to rustle along. I'm drawing pistol ammunition for the gunners."

"Good," said Eadie, "I'll go with you. I've got to get some pistol bullets, too. Your machine-guns do any shooting now, or are they still using you for a fatigue detail?"

"I'll say we shoot," said Ham. "When we was at Le Charmel we kept off a flock o' planes for two hours. Boy, we burned up ammunition that morning."

"Bring any down?"

"One," said Ham. He grinned. "We found out afterward it was an American. Never mind, I been wantin' to sock one o' them fresh aviators for a long time."

In the center of a pile of freshly opened boxes sat a distracted-looking man. About him were clustered several others protesting. The distracted man's face was wrinkled, his curly hair was fading away from the top of his head, and he was older by ten years than the oldest soldier about him. His name was "Cokey" Mullins and he fulfilled the duties of supply sergeant to the battery, though he had been reduced to the grade of private several months ago. The other men greeted Eadie and Cokey gave vent to a hoarse laugh.

"Here's Eadie back again. How's Eadie? Did they kick you out of that hospital?"

"Sure," said Eadie, "you don't think I'd come back otherwise, do you? Give us about a hundred rounds of pistol ammunition."

"Whoa, boy!" cried Cokey. "R'ar back there! Hundred rounds! Man, who are you? Listen to him, boys!"

"Never mind listenin' to him, Coke," said one of the others. "Give us our bullets. We got somethin' to do besides monkey with you."

The other men were section chiefs, evidently drawing pistol ammunition for their men. Coke thrust his hand into a burlap bag and began counting. Eadie did not pay a great deal of attention. He was thinking what next had to be done. His gun must be cleaned, gas mask prepared, some food put in his stomach and some in his pack, and the map!

The sector had to be learned by heart, the roads, where they came from and whither they went, the names and heights of all hills, the names of all woods and farmhouses, the location of the enemy lines, and the approximate ranges of any good aiming points behind them.

Eadie's job with the battery had been a combination of observer and liaison sergeant. The guns, firing on the enemy from some concealed point, could not see the target. Some one, therefore, must be where he could see the falling shells and correct the aim of the guns if necessary. This job had been Eadie's. In addition, when any infantry sent back a request for fire, but neglected to send their location, it was Eadie's task to go out and find said infantry and then locate them accurately on the map, so that the battery, in giving the requested fire, would not shoot up the infantry it intended to aid.

And to locate units quickly and accurately, a man must have a very good idea of the country in which he is operating. The mistaking of one farmhouse for another, of a road running east and west for a parallel road a half mile farther on, is a slight thing indeed, and on a dark night in blinding rain might happen to any one, but such a mistake in time of war means a lot of unnecessary deaths, possible loss of a position, and even the failure of a general attack.

"And me," said Eadie aloud, "I've got half an hour to memorize the map in."

"What you want, Sergeant Eadie?" asked Cokey.

"Some bullets, and make it snappy."

Cokey Mullins reached into a burlap bag and brought out a handful of pistol ammunition, from which he counted ten cartridges. These he handed to Eadie.

"Ten," said Eadie.

"Ten," repeated Coke, "yes, ten. You speak like you reckoned to get more."

"You don't mean to say that you're going to send me into battle with ten shells, do you?"

"That's all he's givin' any one," said Ham, who still lingered.

"You don't mean to say that I've got to start a drive with ten cartridges, do you?" cried Eadie. "Why, my ——, I could shoot all that off at one Boche."

"That's all you get," said Cokey, tying up the neck of the sack. "There ain't much here and the Old Man says ten rounds per man. Whoop! Run along now, little boy!"

"Listen," said Eadie, "these gunners don't need pistol ammunition any more than a toad needs a pocket. If the Boche got close enough to them to use pistols, they'd take wings to themselves like a bird. But

I've got to run around out there in the woods all alone!"

"You tryin' to tell me you'd stay an' shoot it out with a Boche? Ho! Ho! Sergeant Eadie, you'll kill me laughin'. Ten rounds, per man, them's orders. If you shoot all them off at a German, you come back and I'll give you more."

"Time flies," said Ham.

Eadie pocketed his ammunition and followed Ham away from the pile of boxes. The horses were being led from the picket line and harnessed to the guns and a number of men were lashing tarpaulins on the fourgon, a small four-wheeled wagon that seemed filled to bursting.

"They better get a move on with those others," said Eadie, pointing to the huge slat wagon, another fourgon, and a two-wheeled cart like a dump-cart. These wagons were still in line, the harness on the poles covered with tarpaulins.

"They ain't going," said Ham. "Nothing goes forward but the firing battery and one fourgon with instruments, my guns, and as much field-gun ammo as they can get into it."

"I'm going to get some food!" said Eadie suddenly. "If the kitchen doesn't go, then there ought to be some chow left. I've got a million things to do, but the first and most important now is to eat. The best knowledge of the country in the world won't help a man if he collapses from hunger. And I haven't had the oat bag on since morning."

"Where yuh going to march?" asked Ham.

"With the machine-gunners," said Eadie, "my old gang of thugs."

"Good," said Ham, "you an' me an' the gunners will follow up the fourgon like we always do. See yuh later." Ham looked at his watch. "Boy, we got fifteen minutes. I gotta step." He darted away at a run.

EADIE wended his way toward the end of the encampment farthest from the picket line. Here he knew the kitchen would be and sure enough, under a dirty tarpaulin he found the chow gun—a greasy table—the cook, smoking a cigaret.

"How's chances on a feed, Joe?" called the sergeant.

"Well, if it ain't Eadie. Heard you was dead. Come in. Got some slum left and coffee and bread and jam. How's that suit you?"

"Fine," said Eadie, "only make it fast, because we move out of here in a few minutes."

"Got it right here," said the cook.

He ladled slum into Eadie's mess-kit, gave him a can half full of jam and handed him several slices of bread.

"Mug o' java," said the cook, filling Eadie's cup, "an' there you are. Well, how are yuh? What happened to you up on the Marne? We heard all kinds o' yarns. First off when you didn't come back we heard you was gone home to the States to be a officer. They had it all round the regiment. Then we heard you bumped off a shavetail outta the machine-guns. Last we heard you an' Collins an' Mike Sergovsky an' Red Sloan was all killed in a heap."

"Most of it's true," said Eadie, gulping coffee. "I was up on the front and some of the gang from the battalion were up there orienting. They told me I was detailed to go home. So then I started on the run for the battery and met Sloan and the rest of them waiting at a crossroads. We took a short cut across a field."

Eadie paused, his eye looking into space, his mind on that red night above the Marne.

"We heard it coming," resumed Eadie, "and we flopped. 'Lie down,' says the nurse to me, 'you're at Jouy-sur-Morin.' The next I knew I was on a hospital train. Joe, if you want to know what fun is, you want to ride on a hospital train, three in a bunk, said bunk being built for one."

"Are you a member of this battery?" asked a disagreeable voice.

Eadie looked up. An officer stood before him, a thin man, with a nervous, petulant mouth, angry eyes and the air of a spoiled child looking for some one to bully.

"Yes, sir," said Eadie.

"What do you mean by loafing in the kitchen when we're all trying so hard to get away on time? Why haven't you eaten your supper long ago?"

"I just rejoined, sir," said Eadie.

"Where have you been?"

"I've just come back from hospital, sir."

Eadie shifted his arm ever so slightly so that the officer might see the wound stripe.

"Where were you hit?" asked the officer.

"I wasn't hit, I was gassed."

"Oh," said the officer. There was a

short pause. "Have you authority to wear that wound stripe?"

"No, sir," said Eadie, "but I expect—"

"Well, you'd better take it off then. Hurry and finish your meal and do some work. I dare say you've done little enough the past month or so."

The officer walked coldly away.

"For ——'s sake, who is that?" gasped Eadie. "Where the —— did he come from?"

"Oh, don't mind him, he's simple," said the cook, throwing away his cigaret and starting to pick his teeth with a splinter. "Name's Connor. I think they got him off a salvage pile somewhere."

"What's his job?" asked Eadie. "He throw any weight around?"

"Naw. Shavetail. In charge o' the echelon now—wheeled transport an' the like o' that."

"He your boss?" asked Eadie, attacking the slum again.

"Huh!" said the cook, "he thought he was. I had a shin-bone cookin' here the other mornin' an' he says to me, 'What's for dinner today?' Sye, 'Soup.' 'Tain't enough,' says he. Sye, 'I'm takin' orders from the mess sergeant.' 'Don't be insubordinate,' says he. Sye, 'This here is a regular outfit an' there ain't but two men rates —— high round this kitchen. Them's the battery commander an' the mess sergeant.' 'We'll see about that,' says he. Sye, 'Do! There's the captain's tent right over there under that big tree.' Well, Sergeant, he went over there and his ears was red as fire. Well, when he come out, they was redder'n ever. Why, —— *him!*" cried the cook, throwing away his toothpick and leaping to his feet, "I was slingin' hash in this man's Army before he was pupped!"

"Don't mind him," said Eadie, "he's simple."

He started to laugh and choked on a piece of bread.

"I ain't riled," said the cook, "I'm just tellin' you about it."

"I'm glad he's staying here," said Eadie. "There'll be enough things at the front to bother me. Look, can you let me have a can of hardtack and some canned willy? I want to take them along in my musette."

"That shavey won't go nowheres near the front," said the cook, rummaging for the hardtack and willy. "There are too many *soldados* eager an' willin' to let go a slug at him. There! There goes the whistles. I'm glad I'm a cook. It's gonna be a wet night."

"—— it," muttered Eadie. He stood up and put the can of hardtack and the canned willy into his musette. Whistles were blowing all over the woods, he could hear the rattling bang of the gun-carriages forming column on the road, and the hoarse cries of the dismounted men answering to their names as the roll was called.

"So long, Joe," said the sergeant.

"Good luck," replied the cook. "Bring us back a few souvenirs."

Eadie ran to where he had left his pack and found the fourgon already drawn out on the road with the machine-gunners grouped behind it.

"Come on, Eadie," called Ham. "Leave your pack. Orders is to leave packs—they come up later if we're in need of 'em. Shove it under that tarpaulin over there with the rest of 'em. Got your name on it?"

"Sure has," said Eadie, untying his overcoat from the pack. "That isn't such a bad order. I won't have to hike all night with a full pack. Oh, ——, that —— map!"

The sergeant looked desperately around for Lieutenant Sawyer, the officer to whom the captain had directed him to report to memorize the map. He discovered the officer, already mounted, moving down the road. The sergeant pursued him.

"Oh, Lieutenant," he gasped, "I'm supposed to memorize the sector and I couldn't get a second to do it until now. Could I borrow your map while there's a little daylight left?"

"Hullo, Sergeant," said the lieutenant, leaning from the saddle to shake hands. "It wouldn't do you any good to borrow the map now. You couldn't see, and we won't be allowed any light. I wouldn't dare lend it to you, because it's the only fire map we've got."

"Oh man!" muttered the sergeant helplessly.

"It isn't really necessary for you to bone the map," said the lieutenant, moving out again. "Don't worry. Have you got a first-aid packet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's all you need."

With a loud cry from the different drivers and the slapping of whips, the column began to move. Six-thirty exactly. In those days of thousands of men and few roads, columns

were scheduled and routed like railroad trains and they must move with the same regularity.

A commanding officer that moved out his column five minutes late was liable to lose his job, for other columns were waiting to use the same road and would move out from different places with the expectation of finding the road clear when they got to it. If it wasn't clear, they would have to wait and others behind them, with the result that all would be confusion and delay and some units would arrive at their destinations after daylight, with the consequent danger of discovery by the enemy.

Often at a certain hour a narrow road, wide enough for one-way traffic only, would be switched from north-bound to south-bound columns. And if the north-bound column was late, and the south-bound column started on time—as it would have to—things would be interesting. There are few worse places in the world to be than on a narrow road near the front in the small hours of the morning, when a mile-long column of trucks has encountered a mile-long column of field artillery going in the opposite direction. If the enemy starts to shell the road about the time that the two columns meet, joy will reign supreme.

The battery turned out on to the main road. There was a little knot of men gathered there to take a last look at the departing troops and among these Eadie recognized Coke Mullins, the supply sergeant.

"Whadda yuh say on some more ammunition?" called Ham.

"Can't give it to you boys to waste. Whoop! Ammunition costs money."

"He's going to keep it to sell to the Algerians," said Eadie. The chorus of jeers that followed this remark nettled the supply sergeant.

"What's that on your arm, Eadie?" replied Coke with a red face.

"It's something you'll never wear," yelled back the sergeant.

"Right," agreed Ham. "Get in your hole, Coke, the soldiers are goin' to war. Come up tomorrow and souvenir what's left of us."

THE column rattled and bumped along the road northward. It began to rain and Eadie put on his slicker.

"Well, so we're driving," said he. "And I broke my neck to get up here in time to go with it. Figure that out! Well, I suppose if I'd got here too late for it I'd have been just as mad."

"Wait till you see the place we're drivin' at," said one of the machine-gunners. "I wouldn't give a Dijon franc for our chances o' goin' ten yards."

"Have you been up on the front?" asked the sergeant in surprize.

"Up on the front?" cried all.

"—— right we been up. Every night for the last coupla weeks."

"We been buryin' ammunition," explained Ham. "We go up and bury shells where the battery is going to be. Fifty rounds here, fifty rounds somewhere else. Every one in the outfit went up and worked like ——."

"Have we got a good place for the guns?" asked Eadie.

Again every one tried to answer at once.

"I'll say it's good," they cried. "It's out in No Man's Land about fifty yards in front o' the trenches."

"And there's a great big hill there," said Ham, "the biggest hill I ever see and on top of it's the Boche. Boy, they can lean out of their observatories and spit on the gunners."

"Kid us along!" scoffed Eadie.

"All right," said the gunners. "Wait till it gets daylight an' see."

Darkness fell and the rain increased. Eadie remembered that his gas mask had not had its eye pieces greased and that the rain would blur his vision when he put it on. His pistol would be still gummy with cosmoline. The barrel was not even clear. After the fatigue of the previous day, the night march was doubly exhausting, even though he could rest by sitting on the steps of the fourgon during the frequent halts. Try as he could, he could not shake off a deep depression, which, as the night and the march progressed, began to develop into downright fear.

"What's the matter, Sergeant?" asked Ham, sitting down beside Eadie during one of the halts. "You don't seem to have much to say."

"I tell you, Ham, I'm scared," said Eadie. "I've been running around France for the last ten days or so and I'm all tired out. And then to be wet and cold. This rain gets my goat. They say that a man's first battle is the worst, and after that he doesn't mind. What a —— lie! This isn't my first scrap by a long shot, but I'm

twice as scared as I ever was on the Marne."

"So'm I," said Ham. "Wait till you see the front, though, and what we've got to drive against, an' if you don't put in for a new suit of underwear, I'll eat my tin hat. Man, my teeth rattle every time I think of it."

"Is it colder than —— here, or is it my imagination?" asked Eadie, shivering violently.

"Yeh, it's cold," said Ham, "there's swamps around here makes it that way. Damp comes out of 'em."

Before Eadie's eyes the dim shapes of the gunners moved back and forth in the darkness. A horse stamped, rattling his trace chains and his driver cursed softly. From the head of the column came a wailing cry—

"Forwar-r-rd, hoooooooo!"

"Gup!" said the drivers. Whips slapped, horses stamped, the carriages creaked, and the march began again.

The column continued its way through the dripping woods, and the rain fell harder and harder. The men behind the fourgon held little conversation. They were all machine-gunners, with the exception of Eadie. Machine-gunners with a field battery led a hard life. In this outfit they were a sort of general fatigue detail. If there was a dugout to be dug, a garbage pit to be filled in, a road to be cut through brush, ammunition to be carried or wood to be cut, the machine-gunners did it.

There were two machine-guns with each battery for aircraft defense, and one man was left with the guns to shoot at raiding airplanes, while the rest bore down heavily on picks and shovels. The machine-gunners now meditated on what their particular job would be during the coming attack. One thing they were sure of, that the job would be unpleasant. Eadie, on his part, was too tired to talk. Only once did he speak, after the first time.

"Ham," said he, "did you see Darcy anywhere? Do you suppose they brought him up, or left him?"

"They probably left him to come along tomorrow with the men's packs and the rest of the wheeled transport. He was wounded, you know, and just back from hospital."

"Wounded?" cried Eadie. "What difference would that make? So was I!"

"Aw, you know what I mean, he was really hit," said Ham. "Anyways, they need you to observe or parley French for 'em or somethin'."

Eadie responded with a grunt. They marched in silence for some time, and then passed through a ruined town, where chinks of light showed in the cellars. Out of this town they turned, across a wide plain, along a road where the shell-holes every few yards began to impede the march of the carriages. Far off in the distance gleamed a row of lights, like those of a distant boulevard. These lights flickered and changed position constantly, but there was always a long line of them in air.

"Is this us?" asked Eadie.

"This is us," replied Ham. "Them lights is the German lines."

"How much farther do we go?" asked Eadie.

"Oh, quite a ways," said one of the machine-gunners. "Yup, quite a drag yet. I been over this —— road so many times I know every shell-hole in it."

"Scared, Sergeant?" asked another man.

"—— right, I'm scared, aren't you?"

"No, I ain't scared really, but my stummik gets to feelin' queer the minute we leave them last houses."

"Ham," muttered Eadie, "what do you suppose would happen if the Boche happened to spot this column? Suppose one of those lights drifted this way."

"There'd be as nice a mess of horse an' man hash as ever you see," replied Ham. One of the machine-gunners coughed nervously and after that there was silence, lest the Boche hear them talking across two thousand yards of country.

In a short time Eadie could tell by the action of the column—a long halt, a forward movement, and advance of a few yards, halt again, advance a few yards more, halt again, that the end of the march had been reached and that one by one the guns were being turned off the road, flogged over the ditch and taken to their positions in the field.

"IS SERGEANT EADIE behind that fourgon?" called a voice from the darkness, that Eadie recognized as the captain's.

"Here, sir!" answered Eadie. He turned in the direction of the voice and found it came from what looked like a high bank along the road.

"Careful," said the captain, "there's a trench along the road. There's another one here. Feel around with your foot and you feel the bridge into it. Here, give me your hand."

The sergeant groped about until he found the other's hand and then managed to get across what felt like a plank leading from the road to the high bank. Once across the plank he could feel the slippery stickiness of a trench floor.

"Come on," said the captain. Eadie followed the sound of slickers brushing the trench wall. He heard water splashing and before he realized it he was knee-deep in icy water himself. The sound of splashing ahead ceased and then another mysterious voice spoke from the blackness.

"This way," said the voice. "Mind the step—it's quite high."

In spite of this warning, Eadie stumbled and fell, bruising his shin badly. He felt boards under his hands when he landed, a match crackled, and then a candle lighted the darkness. Eadie found himself in a dugout, a burrow, a hole in the wall of the trench, so narrow that two boards laid side by side floored it. Along one side a bunk had been dug out of the wall and on this bunk sat Eadie's captain and another man, also an officer by his face, though otherwise his appearance was that of an enlisted man. A doughboy officer, Eadie knew at once. The infantry officers, knowing that every enemy sniper is hunting them as targets, do not go in very strongly for an officer-like appearance.

"This is the sergeant that's going with you," said Eadie's captain, opening his map case.

"Where's the officer?" asked the doughboy.

"Well," said Eadie's captain, "to tell you the truth, I'm shy of officers. I've only got the executive and one other who's got to stay with me. He's too valuable to send cavorting off to get killed. The sergeant's going with you alone."

"But can he do the job?" asked the doughboy, looking searchingly at Eadie.

"Oh, yes," replied the captain, "he's very capable, more so than most officers, and he's had considerable battle experience. Now, Sergeant, listen. Have you got the sector well in mind?"

"Yessir," said Eadie.

He hadn't, but it was no time to admit it at that moment.

"Well, this country you know is pretty flat, so we can't find a good O. P. Hence we have to send you along with the infantry. They're a good outfit, the Sixteenth, and you ought to have an amusing day."

"What will my duties be, sir?" asked Eadie, clearing his throat.

"Not much. We'll give you a pistol and some rockets and if the infantry want the range lengthened the captain, who is battalion commander, will tell you. Whatever he wants done, he'll tell you and you shoot the corresponding rocket. When the advance reaches its objective, you'll take the co-ordinates of all the good targets and the location of our troops and come back with the information. This sergeant is just back from—er—detached duty, Captain, so maybe I'd better read him the order.

"'Headquarters First Division—we're attached to them for the operation—A. E. F. September 9th, Field Orders 36. Very secret. The first army attacks at H hour on D day, that is at five o'clock tomorrow morning, to reduce the Saint Mihiel salient by two simultaneous attacks, one from the south and one from the west. The First Division participates in the attack as the left division of the Fourth Corps.' Mmmmm. 'Mission of the division'—never mind that. 'Formation of troops'—never mind that. 'Objectives.' Ah! Twenty minutes the barrage stands on the first objective and on the second too, remember that. And it will stand in front of the third objective until eleven o'clock. The fourth objective you'll have to regulate by rockets as the captain or whoever relieves him in command of the battalion directs. Mmmmmm.

"The rest isn't of importance. 'Artillery; the following units etc.' Mmmmmm. 'One regiment 75mm. 3d F. A. Brigade.' That's us. 'Tanks.' Mmmmmm. 'Gas and flame troops. Cavalry!' By ——, they're going to use cavalry. Prisoner escort, probably. Well, that's enough. Any questions? No? Have you got a first aid packet?"

"Yessir!"

"Well, keep it handy. And don't take any letters or orders or maps or anything on you that might give information to the enemy in case you should—er—drop them, or anything."

"No, sir."

"That's all. Stick around outside and

the captain will take you over to the jumping-off place with him when he goes. Good luck."

Eadie's captain shook hands with him and the sergeant went out again into the wet trench. Outside in the trench the rain came down in sheets. Eadie had never seen such a downpour. He felt his way along the wall, looking for some place to sit down where he could get his feet out of the water. A dim shape before him resolved itself into two men standing against the wall, a blanket over their heads.

"Who's there?" asked Eadie.

"We're sentries, sir," said the men.

"I'm a sergeant from the field artillery," said Eadie, delicately letting the men know that he was not an officer. "Do you belong to the garrison of the trench? What outfit are you from? Are you out of the Sixteenth?"

"Naw," said the men, "we're shock troops. We're gettin' relieved outta here tonight to go pull off a battle somewhere."

"Ah," said Eadie, "is this a hot sector?"

"No, it ain't, it's cold as —— here, especially nights."

"I mean is it lively?"

"Well," said the men, "it is and it ain't. You can hear patrols out in the wire sometimes an' if a man walked around the parapet in the daytime he'd most like get shot at, but otherwise we don't see much action."

"They got a hill there," spoke up the other man, "an' the Boche on top of it can see us come outta our dugouts. Man, I ain't kiddin'. A guy can't write a letter to his girl without thinkin' the Boche are lookin' over his shoulder an' readin' every word of it."

"Psst!" hissed one of the sentries.

A man was coming splattering down the trench.

"Are you there, Sergeant?" asked the newcomer. Eadie recognized the doughboy captain's voice.

"Yessir," he replied.

"Come on, then."

THE sergeant followed the officer down the trench. They came out on the road and the officer turned along it in the direction that the column had taken. The going was very rough and in the intense blackness it was impossible to see the surface of the road. They had not gone more than a few steps before Eadie fell into a water-filled shell-hole. He scrambled out again as best he could, and was comforted by the captain's telling him not to make so much noise. There was a loud splash, scratching, scrambling, another louder splash, and a confused gurgling that cleared into the captain's voice raised in profane wrath. Eadie was glad the night was dark and he could laugh to his heart's content without fear of discovery.

"Halt!"

Eadie complied instantly.

There was a long silence.

"Say your piece," spoke up the captain, "and get it over with."

"You Americans?" asked the unseen sentry.

"Surest thing," replied the captain.

"Pass."

"That's the front line we just passed," said the captain. "Look out for these shell-holes. They're quite thick here."

He fell into one just then with all the noise and splashing of a diving horse landing in a tank. Eadie went into one himself, into icy water up to his waist.

"Listen," said the captain, "what's that noise down there?"

"I can't make out," said Eadie, after a minute of straining his ears. "It sounds like a horse pawing."

"I guess that's what it is," agreed the captain. "Some fool has tied up a horse in the road there. Let's go down to your battery here and find out if it belongs to them. The Boche are liable to send out a patrol to see what that noise is. Have you got a gun?"

"Yessir," said Eadie.

He wondered how useful it would be, strapped to his waist under slicker and overcoat and full of cosmoline. At least it wouldn't get rusty from being plunged into water every few minutes.

The captain led Eadie off the road and across a field. The sergeant could feel grass and new ruts under his feet and knew that the guns must have passed that way. They followed the track of these ruts downhill, then abandoned them for the faint sound of digging. In this way they came to the battery, where the gunners were digging holes for the trail spades.

"That horse?" answered some one in response to the captain's inquiry. "We don't know who it belongs to. Some one

tied him up out there to a tree. There's forty rounds of high-ex shells under that tree and that horse is pawin' at 'em. We don't dare untie him nor dig up the shells either, for fear one of 'em will go off."

"Will shells explode if they haven't got the fuses set?" asked the captain.

"Well, that's the question," replied the other.

"You're liable to have a Boche patrol in here," said the captain. "Who's in charge? Well, it's none of my business. Come, Sergeant, my battalion is supposed to come in and spend what's left of the night directly in rear of this battery. There's a little knoll here. Let's go up and wait for them."

They climbed up the low hill again and sat down on the ground. The view was quite good from there. Eadie could see the lights from the German trenches and now and again, in a light that went up from somewhere to the right of the battery, the gleaming bones of a dead town, the wrecks of walls, a chimney or two, and piles of white rubbish made of the stones with which the town had been built. There were trees somewhere in the middle distance, their leaves dripping with rain that glittered in the white light of the flares. The captain muttered something about one o'clock. Rain seeped under Eadie's slicker; mud and water had soaked through his breeches so that he felt as if he were naked from the waist down. He became conscious suddenly of a rustling overhead, a soft whistling, like the stirring of wind through lofty trees.

"*Psssssss!*" went something and the sound died away in the distance, as if whatever it was that passed trailed long streamers of fluttering silk behind it. Again that long hiss that Eadie could hear for a long time until it finally died away far over the German lines. The rain drumming on his helmet hindered his hearing. He removed the helmet and then could hear better. The sound now was clearer, like the waving of thousands of flags.

"It must be the bombardment," thought Eadie. "I'm glad I'm not on the receiving end." He listened for the reports of the guns, the thunder of hundreds of cannon, but heard no sound save that gentle sighing, that swift rushing far above him, a rush that grew to a sharp hiss and then died away into a gentle sigh and then silence. He heard neither the report of the gun that fired it, nor the explosion of the shell when it struck. The lights still continued to glow above No Man's Land.

"Here's my battalion," said the captain suddenly.

Men appeared all around Eadie. He could hear some one reporting to the captain, a tale of wrong roads, companies gone astray in the darkness, and the sad news that the battalion was shy about twenty-five per cent. of its effective strength.

"Where are they?" asked the captain.

"God knows," said the other man. "A platoon from this company, a squad from that, ten men from another. It wasn't the men's fault. Other outfits kept cutting into the column at crossroads. We had a —— of a time. Worse than the night before Soissons. It seems as if every time we planned a drive it rained soup and stones to splash it."

"The Germans claim they're in direct liaison with heaven," remarked the captain. "Maybe they are. Some of us will know this time tomorrow night. Well, have the men dig in and get some sleep. At four o'clock every one up."

Shortly there was the sound of packs thumping on the ground, men's voices subdued with fatigue and the scrape of pick and shovel on rocky soil. This died away, little by little, and all was silent once more.

"Hush! Hush!" said the shells overhead.

"You'd better get some sleep, Sergeant," said the captain, "you'll need it. I'm going around to have a look at my companies. Stay here and shut your eyes a minute."

"I'd just as soon come with you," said Eadie. "It will warm me up a bit."

"Don't be a fool," said the captain. "You won't do any good running around with me. Stay here and rest. You won't get another chance for some time."

The captain swished away and Eadie, drawing up his legs to get them under the shelter of his slicker and overcoat, pillowed his head on his gas mask and put his helmet over his face. The infantry had each man dig a hole for himself to sleep in, so that he would have protection in case of a bombardment, but Eadie was an artilleryman and so slept on top of the ground. Furthermore he had no pick and shovel to dig a hole with if he had wanted to. He listened to the rain rattling on his helmet, he thought of his

gas mask, its eyepieces not greased, and his gun, that was too much so. He thought also of this sector that he did not know. Perhaps he would have luck and get a slight wound right at the beginning of the affair. But that would mean hospital again and the prospect was not alluring.

"Come, come, Sergeant!" said a voice. "Come, it's time you were up. I've let you sleep till the last minute."

Eadie pushed off his helmet and sat up. It was no longer raining and day was not far off. The eastern horizon was already quite light and overhead, right in the zenith, was a patch of blue. All about Eadie men were rising from the ground, coming out of their holes, as the dead will on the Judgment Day. They arose, settled their helmets, adjusted their gas masks, and moved off into the dusk. Their voices made a murmuring like the sea on the shore. Eadie, stiff with cold, hobbled after the captain, past group after group of soldiers, all going downhill in the half darkness, and groaning with the pain of their stiffened limbs.

It was daylight by the time they had waded through a creek and come to a road. Evidently this was to be the jump-off. The captain halted and looked about him. Eadie thought the moment propitious for a look on his own part, to see if there were any outstanding features of the sector that might serve as guides later on. Behind there was nothing but rolling fields gray under the dawn and afar off a road with trees that crossed the horizon. There were nice deep dugouts along that road, thought Eadie enviously. He turned and looked the other way. One look was enough. Out of a level plain leaped a mountain. It towered out of sight among the clouds. No need for any guide-posts in that sector. Wherever Eadie might find himself he could see that mountain and know that his battery was at the foot of it. That is, the battery *had been* at the foot of it.

Eadie remembered a battery he had seen on the Marne, a German battery, that had been shoved forward as Eadie's had been, to cover an advance. The range of a field gun is about four miles and if the infantry is at all aggressive in a drive, they are liable to run out of range and the guns must cease firing while they are moved up within range again. This consequent cessation of artillery support is liable to give the enemy a chance to rally and prevent the further advance of the infantry. Hence the light guns are placed as far forward as they can be.

This German battery on the Marne, then, was very close to the bank of the river, in plain sight of all the observation posts on the opposite bank. The life of that battery had been short. Eadie had counted twenty-four bodies under the guns and the fragments of several more dangling from the trees overhead. He remembered that there were trees near his battery, too.

About Eadie the men discussed the mountain. The outfit would never pass it. The outfit would take it by frontal attack. There was a strong belief that it was to be blown up by a mine. In fact certain soldiers claimed to have talked with men in Toul who had sunk said mine. All agreed that something would be done, for to think of starting a drive with that cliff held by the enemy would be madness.

"Have you got a Very pistol?" asked the captain suddenly.

He turned to Eadie from the group of officers kneeling about a map.

"No, sir," said Eadie, in a feeling of panic.

A Very pistol was for firing rockets.

"Good," said the captain, "I was going to take it away from you if you had. I've found that as long as you leave the artillery shooting their fool barrage in their own fool way, you'll be all right, but if you once start spreading panels or shooting rockets to try to get them to increase their range or shift their target, you'll get a —— fine shower of steel right in the back of the neck. You stick right with me, Sergeant, and leave the artillery alone. And get yourself a rifle, too, from the first casualty. We're going with the first wave and you don't want to monkey around in German trenches with nothing but a pistol. Good! Posts, gentlemen!"

The officers trotted away and the little group of enlisted men, a sergeant-major, two runners and a signal-corps sergeant, began to tighten their lips and settle and resettle their gas masks. Eadie's heart beat so fast that he could hardly breathe. Again he looked around, but could not see more than ten or fifteen men at the most. Not many to start a drive with. It was rapidly growing lighter. Eadie's teeth rattled so that he was in danger of biting off his tongue and he kept working his fingers

to free them of the mud that crusted them. He wished they would start. And his pistol, its barrel full of grease, still in its holster around his waist, under slicker and overcoat! Ah, if the man who invented cosmoline were only there now! Well, what were they waiting for?

Berrrup-blam!

"There go my guns!" cried Eadie excitedly. The captain stood up and spoke quietly to the little staff.

"It's time we were going," said he.

TO BE CONTINUED

LIFE IN THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION

***by* Hugh Vincent**

THE French Foreign Legion, which has always been a subject of much romantic interest, has recently come into great prominence during the fighting with the Riffs.

This picture of the life in the Legion is therefore of particular interest at the present time.

It was Ouida, the famous French authoress, who in her widely read book, "Under Two Flags," first shed the glamour of romance round the French Foreign Legion. Since her day there have been many chroniclers of this interesting subject, most of them adversely criticizing the Legion and everything connected with it. A number of these men are deserters who have served for a time as Légionnaires, but few of them ever got beyond the training depots in Algeria. What they expected to find in the ranks of the Regiment of Strangers one can only conjecture, but let it be said at once that life in the Legion is far from being a bed of roses. It tries a man to the uttermost of his physical endurance, and unless he is very fit and able to train under the most trying conditions, he would better far give the Legion a wide berth.

The Foreign Legion was founded in the year 1831 under the name of the African Auxiliaries. A Belgian adventurer, who styled himself Baron de Böegard, collected round him some 4000 soldiers of fortune, and set sail for Africa, after swearing allegiance to France. They gave such a good account of themselves, however, that a royal edict dated March 10, 1831, sanctioned their incorporation under the name of La Légion Étrangère, or as it is most commonly known in English-speaking countries, the Foreign Legion. The chief recruiting office for both regiments is in Paris, and when a man joins he is sent in the first place to Marseilles. There, at Fort St. Jean, he remains for a few days until he is embarked, with other recruits, on the packet bound for Oran in Algeria. The steamer takes about two days on the passage.

As soon as she is berthed alongside the wharf in Oran, a sergeant of the Legion comes on board and assembles the recruits. When they have landed, he marches them to the fort high up on the hill, which overlooks and dominates, with its masked batteries, the entrance to Oran from the sea.

The road leading up to Fort St. Théresa was made by Légionnaires long since dead.

It sweeps in broad curves right to the top of the hill, and tests, in its ascent, the stamina of the fittest.

This fort is the distributing depot for both regiments of the Legion. On their arrival they are given a meal and are then mustered for particulars of identification. They are asked their name, age, nationality, profession, and whether any of them are musicians, the reason for the latter question being that the Legion band ranks second in point of merit in the armies of France.

The recruits are given their choice of joining the 1st Regiment stationed at Sidi-Bel-Abbés, or the 2nd Regiment located at Saida.

The former is easily first favorite with the young soldiers, for Sidi-Bel-Abbés is a gay place with cafés and dance halls, and wine, too, is cheap in Algeria.

After a day or two at Oran, they are sent forward to the regiment of their selection.

Sidi-Bel-Abbés is distant about eighty miles from Oran. Here are the great barracks of the 1st Regiment covering nearly two acres of ground.

They are greeted on arrival at the barracks by the old Légionnaires with chaff and banter.

"Here comes *Les Bleus* (the blues)," they shout derisively, and pass scathing remarks on the appearance of the neophytes.

The recruits are then shown to their quarters, and in the morning they are awakened by the cry of "*au jus, au jus*" (the juice) by a soldier going the round of the beds with a big jug of coffee, pouring out a mugful for each man. A few minutes later réveille is sounded, and the corporal exhorts the laggards to "Show-a-leg!" Then ensues a rush to the wash-house, which consists of a huge trough-like arrangement in the barrack yard.

The old hands assist the toilet of *Les Bleus* by throwing buckets of cold water over them. The recruits are then served out with new kits, the "fitting" of each man being the source of much amusement.

At 9:20 A.M. "soup" is served. This dish is in reality Irish stew, for it contains meat cut up into little pieces and vegetables.

The second and final meal of the day is served at 5 P.M., and is also soup. The terrible lack of variety in the food served in the Legion is a source of constant irritation to the men. Every meal, except on very special occasions, consists of soup.

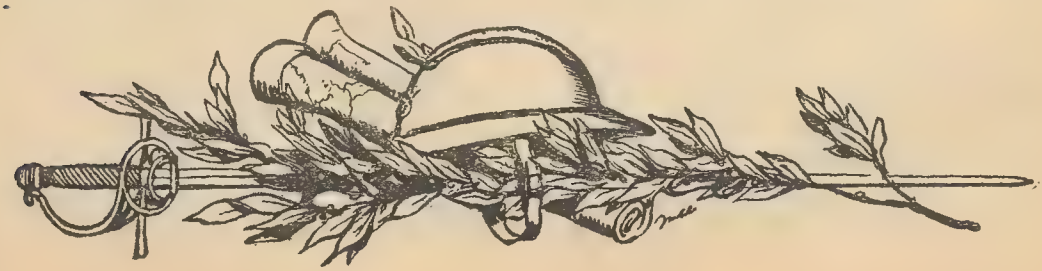
The new Légionnaire now signs on for a minimum period of five years. He receives a bonus of two hundred and fifty francs, half when he signs on and the other half a month later. The pay of a Légionnaire of the second class has been increased to seven pence halfpenny a day with certain small allowances for upkeep of kit. In addition he is allowed a half-pint of red Algerian wine *per diem*.

Perhaps the most trying part of the life of the young soldier is learning to march, for marching is the religion of the Legion. The recruit will start by covering short distances with only his arms, but gradually this is increased until he is able to carry at least seventy pounds weight on his back, and cover thirty miles day by day without interruption at a pace of five kilometers an hour under a broiling African sun. This is the time a man curses the day he set foot in the Legion. The greatest crime a Légionnaire can be guilty of is to fail in any of these soul-destroying marches. It was General Négri, the most popular leader the Legion ever had, who used to ride past the men when marching, calling out, "Légionnaires march or die." He also said, "Other soldiers know how to fight, but the Légionnaire knows how to die."

Iron discipline is maintained, and the punishment meted out for serious offenses is severe in the extreme. Those undergoing one form of it are kept in confinement all the time, except when they are brought out to do six hours' punishment-drill daily. This consists of going round the prison square at the double, carrying a bag containing thirty pounds of sand strapped to the shoulders. He has to halt for a minute or two, and go down on one knee every time he goes round, and the strongest men collapse under the awful ordeal.

Then there is solitary confinement. A Légionnaire sentenced to *cellule* is kept in his cell all the time, and not allowed to leave it under any pretext whatever. He gets no exercise and has no reading matter given him. His cell is about seven feet long by four feet wide, and so shallow that he can hardly turn round. A tiny aperture at the top lets in enough fresh air to keep him alive. He is in semidarkness the whole long day, and his food is reduced to just enough to keep body and soul together.

After a time the young soldiers are sent to one of the camps in Morocco, where they complete their training under what may be termed active service conditions. From these camps they are dispatched to the various posts held by the Legion throughout Morocco, and very soon they are engaged in actual desert warfare.



They Always Forget Something

by NEVIL HENSHAW

Author of "Boulé and the Major," "The Killer, the King, and the Wise Man," etc.

IT COULD hardly be said that Ras Guidry planned the affair. Almost, it planned itself. The various events, coming together so smoothly in sequence, seemed to call for one particular act. And, at the moment, Guidry's ear was tuned for just such a call.

This was because he had bet his pile on Sheriff Bell. He had done so on good advice and in the firm conviction that Sheriff Bell would win. The odds being right, it was to be a coup. And afterward he would invest the proceeds in a trip to New Orleans. There would be good racing next day, which was Mardi Gras. And once at the track itself—

But something had gone wrong. Sheriff Bell had not won. Finishing in the ruck, he had failed even to achieve the doubtful accomplishment of a "show."

When finally he left the pool-room, Guidry wrenched furiously at the strips of pasteboard that were to have been his tickets to wealth. His dream was shattered. It fell away from him like the small twisting shreds that dropped from his hands. No city, no track, no anything. Only the effort to keep going, the same monotonous round of petty gambling.

Hunching his shoulders, Guidry pushed through the swing doors of Comeau's coffee-house on to the sidewalk. It was February in southwestern Louisiana—which is to say that it was pouring. The water came down in a solid white sheet with none of the pattering joyousness of an ordinary rainfall. Rather, it was like the sullen accomplishment of some wearisome duty.

But Guidry did not care. Anything was better than to stay where he was and listen to the talk of the winners. Of course they sympathized with his misfortune. But he knew that, inside, they were laughing at him. No, he would go to his room to think and plan until bedtime. After all, Mardi Gras was not the only day. Perhaps later on—

Picking his way across the quagmire that was St. Pierre's Main Street, Guidry made for the back of town. He had all but reached his lodging-house when he suddenly remembered that he had nothing to smoke. Following the bitterness of Sheriff Bell's defeat, his last cigarets had gone like tinder.

Although a vague, watery glow just ahead of him marked the dago shop at the corner, Guidry faced promptly about. He was particular with his smoking, and this part of town did not afford his favorite brand. There was a chance that he would find it at Pierre Lebrun's. Otherwise he would have to return to Main Street.

Peering through the flood a few moments later, Guidry saw the blur of a second glow at the corner of St. Peter Street. This was Pierre Lebrun's, a small general store that catered to the wants of the country folk.

It was late—almost closing time—and the night was one to keep even townfolk indoors. Yet for all that, a dejected horse and spattered buggy still kept vigil at the

hitching rack in front. Observing this, Guidry sneered.

"Some Yop-Yop," he thought.

A Cajun himself, he felt only contempt for those hardier folk who dwelt beyond the confines of St. Pierre.

The store, when he entered it, appeared deserted. Pierre Lebrun kept no clerk. Nor was he anywhere visible. Turning, Guidry was about to pass out again when, from the rear, he heard a murmur of voices.

The office, of course. He had forgotten it. Evidently it was something important that caused Lebrun to desert the main part of his store.

A faint curiosity seized Guidry. Also, if he missed this chance for his cigarets, he would have to keep on to Main Street. Moving quietly, he made for the back of the store.

The office, a railed-off square, was walled in on one side by the end of a high-piled counter. At the other towered a stack of packing cases. Only by peering through the narrow alley between counter and cases could Guidry see into the open space beyond.

It was a small space, cluttered inside the railing with an iron safe, a high, littered desk, a stool, and two cane-bottomed chairs. Near the safe stood Lebrun, a loose wad of bills in one hand. These he thumbed over by the light of the lamp that he had placed upon the iron top before him.

His visitor sat upon the edge of the nearest chair, a typical small planter from the parish. At his feet was a half filled sack which he kicked with one foot while speaking.

"You see?" he was saying. "This is it—the sample. All of the seed must be the same or I will not buy. It is new, it is different. Otherwise I would not haul it half way."

He paused and added earnestly:

"You will be careful, Pierre? You will examine each sack? As you see you can not mistake it."

Lebrun, intent on his counting, did not reply until he had turned over the last of the bills.

"*Bien*," said he as he stooped to the safe. "It is all here, the two hundred dollars. Yes, I will be careful, Aucoin. And you say that the seed will arrive on Thursday?"

"That is right," answered the planter. "Next day I will send my wagons."

From his place beyond the packing cases, Guidry listened impatiently. After all, it was nothing—only one of the various accommodations with which Lebrun favored his out-of-town customers. Guidry understood perfectly.

This Aucoin wished to buy some seed from some one upon the other side of the parish. The seed, being brought half way in, would be delivered and paid for at the store. Afterward Aucoin would haul his purchase the rest of the way to his place.

Guidry sneered again as he prepared to depart. He would save time by keeping on to Main Street. He knew these Yop-Yops. The whole business would be gone over again and again before the countryman departed. The safe door thudded as he turned away. There went the two hundred dollars.

With the thought Guidry forgot his cigarets. Two hundred dollars! It was a lot for that little store. It would be there until the day after Mardi Gras. And Lebrun would guard it alone. A nice sum, two hundred dollars. With that much at the track itself—

But how? That was the question. It was not easy just then to do such things at St. Pierre. There was Fremin, the sheriff. He was clever, that one. It was he who said, "They always forget something." And usually he found this something and sent his man to Baton Rouge.

No, it would not do. He, Ras Guidry, was only a petty gambler. Such things were not in his line. Yet it might be so easy. If only he could find a way—a sure way, a safe way, one that would be beyond the cleverness of Sheriff Fremin.

Guidry left the store with the thing all jumbled up inside him. Thoughts flashed through his brain like the scattered bits of a kaleidoscope. Two hundred dollars—the track—Lebrun—Sheriff Fremin—the day after Mardi Gras—

All at once Guidry stopped short. It was exactly as if those scattered, kaleidoscopic bits in his brain had fallen together to form a pattern. And what a pattern it was.

Guidry gasped. It was so plain, so simple, so utterly reliable. He marveled that he had not grasped it before. But then, he had reckoned without tomorrow's festival. It had remained for the thought of Mardi Gras to remind him of the "Comos."

THE Comos had begun the year before in a card-room at Comeau's coffee-house. Eight men were in the game: Denbo, Lovas, Borel, Lissard, the Simon brothers, Ras Guidry, and Cordova, the Italian. It was Lissard who suggested that all mask alike for the forthcoming carnival. He spoke half in jest, but the rest were swift to realize the possibilities of his proposal.

At once the game was abandoned for a discussion of ways and means. A costume was adopted. All were sworn to secrecy. When at last the cards were dealt again, each player had become a member of the new organization.

Its name was obvious, especially as it offered an opportunity to burlesque the famous "Crew of Comus" of the city. Comeau became Como, and the thing was done.

When upon Mardi Gras the Comos appeared, they proved an instant success. Dressed all alike as clowns, and mounted upon a fantastic float of their own creation, they added a touch to the morning's parade that captured the popular fancy. Afterward they scattered about the town to reap the reward of their ingenuity.

The day was replete with small rascalities. Drinks were unpaid for, fruit stands were pilfered, strange pranks were played in the stores and coffee-houses. Yet St. Pierre proved tolerant. It was Mardi Gras and, for all their deviltry, the clowns were amusing.

Thus the Comos had gone their way unmolested. Nor did they foresee any difficulties in the years to come. It was only necessary to ally a certain discretion with the license of the carnival.

All this Ras Guidry considered as he again splashed homeward through the downpour. And, considering it, he came to his decision. At seven to one the odds were alluring. As a gambling man he could not well deny them.

II

GUIDRY had it all worked out before he went to bed that night. But then, the thing was simplicity itself. Instead of the conventional mask of the burglar he would wear a complete disguise. On the same day, at the same hour, this disguise would be worn in replica by seven other men. Let Lebrun try to name his assailant. It simply could not be done.

Sheriff Fremin would be in the same predicament. True, he was clever. But if he—Ras Guidry—were careful, this cleverness would avail the sheriff nothing. The secret of the organization had been kept as well as was possible in a place the size of St. Pierre. It was doubtful if all of the Comos were known. And even if they were, it would make no difference. Sheriff Fremin would be welcome to name his man.

To his fellow Comos, Guidry gave scarce a thought. Let them look out for themselves. They were fools with their petty achievements. They should welcome this glimpse of a broader horizon.

When at last Guidry twisted down beneath his cheap cotton blankets, he smiled in anticipation. He would wait a few days to allay suspicion. Then for the track and the city.

Next morning Guidry awoke to a burst of sunlight. During the night the downpour had ceased—slowly, reluctantly, as if the last sullen drop had been wrung from the unrelenting spaces above. The carnival had triumphed, but not entirely. For all the warmth and brightness the streets would be a sea of mud.

Guidry prepared for them by searching about until he found the high-heeled, heavy-soled shoes that he had bought for a long past hunting trip. When he had laced them well up on his ankles, he unlocked his trunk and took out a square, flat package. Inside was his costume, a one-piece clown suit of white cotton cloth, that was liberally sprinkled with staring black stars and crescents.

Guidry dressed carefully, adjusting the lower part of the suit, so that a good reach of shoe-leather protected the final ruffles of his baggy trousers. Also, before slipping into the sleeves, he looped on an arm holster carrying a bulldog revolver. His high-pointed cap and plain pink mask he slipped into the pockets of his slicker. Then, having buttoned the garment carefully about him, and made sure that no telltale spot of white was showing, he slipped off by back ways to the bayou bank and the deserted warehouse that had been chosen for the den of the Comos.

The day that followed was a long one for Guidry. Those hours of mirth and revelry

which, the year before, had seemed fairly to flash away, now dragged interminably. The parade with its glitter, its tinsel, its blare of music and laughter, proved merely a test of his patience. And afterward the crowded streets with their drifts of high-voiced, gaily colored Mardi Gras held no allure for the waiting masker. If he played his allotted part, it was only through fear of suspicion. All seemed silly and useless compared to the night's adventure.

With the coming of dusk, Guidry made for an alley that gave on to St. Peter Street a block below Pierre Lebrun's store. Here he waited, watching the crowds that trickled thinly along this less popular thoroughfare. When, with the coming of the supper hour, the trickle became a dribble and then ceased entirely, Guidry moved up through the shadows. A moment later he entered the store.

III

FROM behind his counter Pierre Lebrun looked uncertainly at the intruder. At best the Comos were unwelcome guests in any establishment.

"Well?" he demanded.

Guidry wasted no time. Now was his chance, while the street was deserted. Whipping out the bulldog from beneath his armpit, he pointed toward the door. He spoke in the shrill falsetto which all maskers assume to escape detection.

"Lock up, and quickly!" he ordered. "And no tricks, if you do not want a bullet in you."

As Lebrun stepped out from the counter, Guidry eyed him appraisingly. A short, squat man, he had twice the masker's breadth and muscle. But then he was old, and Guidry was armed in addition.

Taking a key from his pocket, Lebrun thrust it into the lock and turned it. Through habit he would also have gone on and placed the iron bar with which he further secured himself. But the masker stopped him sharply.

"Enough," he squeaked. "You will now cut a length of small rope. And remember—I have only to touch this trigger."

Obediently Lebrun made for the rear of the store, moving with his usual calm deliberation. To have seen him one would have thought that he was merely serving some ordinary customer.

As he followed the storekeeper, Guidry fingered his bulldog nervously. It was all turning out as he had planned. Yet somehow he felt uneasy. Lebrun was too cool, too confident. It was almost as if he were waiting. Waiting for what?

Thus Guidry missed the full savor of the rope cutting. The night before he had dwelt on it fondly as the *pièce de rêsistance* of his plan. To have one's victim furnish the very bonds that would bind him. There was a touch for you.

Yet now, when Lebrun halted before his coils of rope and drew out a pocket-knife, Guidry only braced himself, thrusting his bulldog closer.

"Careful!" he warned. "Careful!"

And when the rope had been cut he snatched it with his free left hand, his right arm held rigid to cover the movement.

"To the office!" he ordered.

It was only a matter of steps to the office. But the way was both dark and narrow. It seemed almost a journey to Guidry. When at last he stepped inside the railing his nerves were jumping, and his mask clung stickily to his face.

A lamp burned upon the littered desk, and its light struck a thin glint of metal from beyond the fingers of the storekeeper's hanging right hand. Guidry's nerves jumped harder than ever. The pocket-knife! And he had allowed Lebrun to carry it opened through the blackness of the alley between store and office. It was all right now, but he should have thought of it. He must think of everything if he were to get the better of Sheriff Fremin. His voice shrilled with the next command.

"That knife—drop it!"

Lebrun had been backed into his position of the night before. With the order he raised the knife and dropped it upon the top of the safe behind him. And as he did so he preserved his same strange stolidity—the stolidity that suggested both calmness and tenseness.

All was ready now. Throwing his rope upon the nearest chair, Guidry thrust forward his clumsy weapon. He aimed it carefully as he piped his final instruction.

"In that safe is a roll of two hundred dollars. You will take it out and lay it upon the top. Then you will sit in this chair and allow me to tie you. Be quick

and be careful. I will not hesitate to kill you."

Obeying instantly, Lebrun dropped down on one knee. To Guidry there was something grotesque in the movement. It was as if the other were at prayer.

But then, Guidry knew nothing of the manipulation of a safe. He watched curiously as the storekeeper fumbled at the combination. Now the fumbling was over, and Lebrun was twisting a new metal lever. With its click the safe door swung heavily open.

Guidry stared. Intent, fascinated, he forgot all caution. Lowering the bulldog, he moved impulsively forward.

And then Lebrun acted, swiftly, silently, with all the strength of his heavy body. With one hand he seized a fold of the baggy clown suit and sent his assailant crashing against the side of the safe. With the other he slammed the half opened door and twisted the lever.

HALF stunned and wholly demoralized, Guidry did the only thing that he could. Thrusting down the bulldog, he fired blindly. With the shot Lebrun rolled promptly over. All the breath and vigor appeared to go out of him. As he lay he seemed only a flaccid bundle of clothes.

Leaning where he had been jerked against the sharp corner of the safe, Guidry observed this hazily. For all his threats he had never really intended to shoot. Robbery was bad enough, but murder! And now he had been scared into it. Lebrun was dead, of course. That would be his luck. Firing without thought or aim, he had hit a vital spot.

Again Guidry did the only thing that he could. He tried to run for it. But as he sprang forward he was once more clutched by the slack of his trousers and brought up standing.

At this panic seized him. Wild-eyed, gasping, he squirmed and twisted, feeling fearfully behind him. And when at last he had forced his fingers to the end of the captive cloth, they met only the hard surface of the safe.

The touch of the cold metal brought sanity. Of course it had not been Lebrun. Was he not lying there motionless upon the floor? It was all quite plain now. A fold of his spreading trousers had been nipped and held by the door of the safe. And at once he had played the fool. This must not happen again. Here was no matter of Baton Rouge, but of the rope itself. Guidry shivered. It was not like the old days when such a crime would be fastened upon the first convenient black man. He must use his wits if he were to get the better of Sheriff Fremin.

The thought steadied Guidry. At once he braced himself to the task ahead. First he must free himself. Then, before leaving, he must make sure that he left all safe behind him.

Stooping, Guidry examined his imprisoned trousers. The safe was old and its door fit badly. Thus, in slamming, it had taken a generous bite of the thin material. And what was more, it had taken this bite through one of the staring black crescents.

Swiftly yet carefully Guidry went over the situation. Should he tear himself loose he would repair the error of his shooting. That bit of cloth would announce the Comos as surely as if the dead Lebrun had spoken.

On the other hand he would damage his suit beyond repair. Nor, since the cloth had come from the city on special order, could he soon replace it. What then if Sheriff Fremin, discovering the identity of the Comos, should demand their costumes? It would be like him.

The risk decided Guidry. Tugging carefully, he tried to pull himself free. But for all his efforts the fold held firmly.

Again Guidry thought. It did not occur to him to unlock the safe. Lebrun, who knew how, had gone to some trouble to do so. Why waste his time?

But there, on top of the safe, was Lebrun's open pocket-knife. Seizing it, Guidry thrust the blade in the crack of the door and tried to prize out the fold. He worked feverishly now, straining and twisting, until at last the knife-blade broke and tinkled down to the floor.

Guidry gave up. It was no use. First he must get free. The rest could follow. Bracing his feet he tightened the fold, and hacked savagely through it with the blade stump.

Free at last, Guidry conquered his impulse to run, and stood for a moment gazing about him. He could not bring himself to look at that limp huddle upon the

floor. But at least he must make sure that he left no evidence of himself behind. Save for the bit of cloth, common to the Comos, he could think of nothing.

The rope? It belonged to the store. It could add but little to what was so evident. The knife? Guidry hesitated. It could easily go in the bayou. But no. What was the use? Was not the knife Lebrun's? From its looks he had had it a long time. Some one would surely identify it. Let it go back whence it had come. Satisfied, Guidry laid the knife upon the safe top, and fled from the office.

Knowing the store, he did not go out the way he had entered. Instead he turned off to a side door through which the more bulky goods of the place were delivered. Unbarring this, he dropped into the alley alongside, and set off through dark streets to the den of the Comos.

Ten minutes later, wrapped in his slicker, he was well on his way to his room. That he had escaped unobserved he was sure. There now remained the problem of his damaged trousers.

Guidry solved this as he changed his clothes. Like the plan itself it proved quite simple. Since he could not risk a possible demand from Sheriff Fremin for a showing of costumes, he must get himself an undamaged one. Very well then. How better could he accomplish this on short notice than by exchanging suits with some fellow Como? Not only would it make him secure. It might even fasten suspicion elsewhere.

As for his choice, it was easily made. Of the eight members of the organization, seven were French. The one alien was Cordova, the Italian. Let it be Cordova. What business had he, an outsider, in the Comos?

Then too, of all the seven, Cordova lent himself the most admirably to the change. His height and breadth were the same as Guidry's. In addition it was his habit to stupefy himself with drink each Mardi Gras. The small lean-to which he occupied behind his father's shop was well known to Guidry. It should be easily arranged.

So it turned out. Having changed to his every-day wear, Guidry went to the coffee-house where, for the purpose of a possible alibi, he hung about until well after midnight. Then, returning for his torn costume, he hid it beneath his slicker and made for Cordova's lean-to.

Wriggling in through the single window, Guidry found all as he had expected. Cordova sprawled unconscious upon his cot. Near by lay his rumpled clown suit, just as it had been flung to the floor. The exchange was a matter of seconds.

Back in his room, Guidry examined the suit minutely. But for all his pains he found no mark of ownership. This was as it should be. A true Como must be discreet in every particular.

Locking the suit in his trunk, Guidry drew a great breath of relief. He was safe now. Save for the general suspicion that would attach to the organization there was no single thing to connect him with the crime. Let Sheriff Fremin use the last bit of his cleverness. For once it would avail him nothing.

As upon the night before, Guidry slipped beneath his blankets with a sense of satisfaction. It was not until he was settled for sleep that he recalled that, for all his risk and trouble, he had failed to get the two hundred dollars.

IV

DESPITE Guidry's estimate of him, Sheriff Fremin was no scientific investigator of crime. Had you spoken to him of deductions or analyses, he would merely have stared at you. Yet he got results.

This was because, knowing his people, he had an uncanny faculty of putting himself in their places. Once shown a crime, he could usually tell both how and why it had been committed. Next he would make a fair guess at the later movements and reactions of the criminal.

"I, Paul Fremin, have done this thing," he would say to himself. "What will I do now?"

And more often than not the conclusion he arrived at would prove the deciding point in the case.

Thus, when early on Ash Wednesday morning Sheriff Fremin was called to Pierre Lebrun's store, he lost little time in determining the events of the night before. Fortunately nothing had been disturbed. An early riser, glancing down the alley and noticing the open side door, had become suspicious, and had gone inside to investigate. After a look at the office, he had

called the sheriff from the nearest telephone.

Sheriff Fremin had most of it in less than five minutes. One twist of the lever of the half-locked safe, and the thing explained itself. The bit of cloth, the unused rope, the broken knife, the scratched safe door, the roll of bank-notes, each added its part to the story.

At the cloth the sheriff looked longest. Here it appeared was a touch of cleverness. One of the Comos, eh? Which one? It would be his business to find out.

And this bag of rice, trampled and scattered by the dead man's fall? Sheriff Fremin examined the seed. It was curious seed, at first glance like the usual run, on closer inspection differing from it in some vague intangible way.

And that roll of bills which the murderer had tried for and lost? Evidently it had not been the property of Pierre Lebrun. In the first place it was too much. In the second, it had been placed outside of the square tin box in which the storekeeper kept his cash.

As for the broken knife, it was easily identified. The very man who had found the body was able to recognize it as the property of Pierre Lebrun.

Before leaving the store Sheriff Fremin poured some of the peculiar rice seed into an old envelope. On top of it he placed the damaged knife. Though he had searched carefully about the office floor he had been unable to find the bit of broken blade. Nor did he know the origin of the seed.

Such trifles as these intrigued the sheriff. It was as if they spelled out a "WHY?" before him in capital letters.

As he stepped outside, the sheriff caught sight of the street. Despite the sunshine of the day before it was still a bog of putty-like mud. For the best part of the winter this was the usual condition of St. Pierre.

Yet, for all that, Sheriff Fremin spent a good two minutes in staring at the street before going on his way.

BY BREAKFAST time the news was all about. Nor, for once, was the story garbled in any way. Sheriff Fremin made this his first duty. Not only did he tell the tale to those most likely to spread it; he went further and impressed the details upon his listeners in a manner that made them repeat them word for word.

It was one of the Comos. The bit of costume, caught by the safe, proved this beyond doubt. An important piece of evidence, that bit of cloth. From measurements made it evidently came from some spot near the knee. And, of course, there would be the corresponding tear in the garment itself. Here, undoubtedly, was something to go on.

For the rest, the murderer had had only his trouble for his pains. Or at least a roll of two hundred dollars had been found untouched in the safe. Here was further food for speculation. Did the murderer know of this particular sum? Or was he merely making his try at the usual petty cash of the store?

Having sown his seed, Sheriff Fremin sat down in his office to await results. Nor was he kept long inactive.

At noon came a frantic telephone call from Aucoin, the owner of the two hundred dollars. He had just heard the news. And was it true that his money was safe? Of course he was coming right in. But first he must reassure himself.

Thus, for the rest of the morning, the sheriff was busy with Aucoin. From him he learned the full details of his transaction with Pierre Lebrun.

Returning to his office that afternoon, the sheriff again prepared himself to wait. Hardly had he done so when there came a knock at the door, and Cordova entered bearing a bundle wrapped in newspaper. Snatching open this bundle, he drew out and flourished the torn clown suit.

What with his orgy of the night before and his discovery of the meaning of the damaged garment, Cordova was in a state closely bordering on hysteria. His arms waved, his eyes rolled. Words gushed from him like water from a spout.

It was a conspiracy, he declared. An attempt to send him to the gallows. And why? Because he was not French like the rest of his fellow Comos. That was a fine thing, to commit a murder and leave the evidence at his bedside, taking his undamaged suit in exchange.

But fortunately he was innocent. And, more fortunately still, he could prove it. That was why he was here.

On waking and finding the damaged suit, he had put it away without further thought. Being drunk the day before, he had evidently torn it himself. Then he had gone out

and heard of the crime in all its details.

At once he had become suspicious. Returning home he had examined the torn suit and learned of the trick that had been played upon him. For he saw now that the suit was not his. Why, he could not say exactly. Yet he knew it.

At first he had been terrified. He had planned to burn the suit and escape to the city.

Then he had remembered some further details of the crime. The doctors had declared that, when found, Lebrun had been dead for hours, that he had been killed soon after dark.

Thus it was impossible that he, Cordova, could have committed the crime. That afternoon he had gone to a dance in Fausse Point. There he had drunk himself into insensibility, and had been laid out upon the floor of the card-room. At midnight his friends had driven him home and put him to bed. He had made sure of this. The sheriff could ask. A dozen men would swear to what he had said.

No, he had said nothing of the torn suit. He had still been scared. When at last he had made up his mind, he had come at once to the sheriff.

Hearing this tale, Sheriff Fremin believed it. Else why should this man place himself in his hands? Nevertheless, he must make sure. Leaving Cordova in the care of a deputy, he went out. In less than an hour, through careful inquiry, he had fully established the Italian's alibi.

Returning, the sheriff questioned Cordova further. He was sure now that he had spoken to no one of the torn suit and the trick that had been played upon him? Very well then—let him be careful that he did not until he received permission to do so. For the present he would be allowed to go free. But if he attempted to leave town, if he so much as hinted at his part in the affair, he would be instantly put in jail. If he were wise, he would keep to himself at his father's store.

Having scared his man into complete submission, Sheriff Fremin prepared two pieces of writing. The first, a somewhat lengthy document, he set down carefully on a tablet, and laid aside for later typing. The second, a notice, he took out at dusk and pasted with his own hands upon the long looking-glass behind the bar at Comeau's coffee-house. The notice was brief and to the point. It ordered each member of the Comos to report with his costume at the sheriff's office.

This done, Sheriff Fremin called it a day. Nor did he feel that he had left anything unaccomplished. As he saw it, his trap was now set. He had only to wait for his man to walk into it.

V

GUIDRY heard of the notice before he saw it. The news that it had been posted fairly flashed about the town. Thus, when that night he drifted into the coffee-house, he merely glanced at the small square of paper behind the bar.

He did so with growing relief. Expecting this, he had prepared for it. It should make him wholly secure. He would report early the following morning. This would show good intentions, peace of mind. Of course the sheriff had discovered the membership of the Comos. Trust him for that. Then what of Cordova?

Guidry had not seen Cordova since the morning of Mardi Gras. He had heard that he was busy at his father's store. What did this mean? Was the Italian planning to run for it? He hoped so. It would firmly establish his guilt.

But what matter. He, Ras Guidry, was safe. Let Sheriff Fremin do his best. He had been too sharp for him.

It was in this same mood of confidence that Guidry arose the following morning. His coffee taken, he got out the costume and started at once for the sheriff's office. As he walked along he stepped out briskly. He was eager to be done with it. A few questions, a few answers, the showing of the undamaged costume— It would soon be over.

In this, however, he was disappointed. At the court-house he was told that the sheriff, having been called out of town, would not return before midday.

Thus Guidry spent a restless morning in wandering about the streets. Somehow, just then, he could not go to the coffee-house. It was as if he were competing in innocence with his fellow Comos. True to type they had made no mention of the crime in his presence. But what in his absence? Had they talked together? Did they already suspect him?. Well, what if

they did? A little patience and he could laugh at them.

Promptly at noon Guidry returned to the court-house. This time he was admitted by a deputy who told him that, if he would wait, the sheriff would see him.

Left alone, Guidry looked about him. Evidently he was in some outer office. The room was small, and was furnished only with an ancient filing cabinet, a table and some chairs. On the table lay a single document with, beside it, an uncapped fountain pen.

Guidry's eye was caught at once by the document. It looked so clean and white against the battered top of the table. He saw now that it was typewritten. Thus the pen had been placed there for the one who would sign it. Some lawyer's trick, of course. Curious always, Guidry placed his bundle on the table and leaned over.

The next instant he had snatched up the document and was racing through it. And as he did so his throat tightened and his breath came short for, save for a few trifling details, he was reading a full account of his crime.

"*Dieu*" muttered Guidry, and dropped the document as if it were red hot.

As he did so a glass-paneled door opened at one side, and Sheriff Fremin entered the room.

Bracing himself, Guidry faced about. Now that his moment had come, he looked at the sheriff as never he had looked at him before. What he saw reassured him. After all the man seemed ordinary enough, of middle size and age, with a face that was rather pleasant than otherwise.

Guidry breathed easier. Since, evidently he had been seen with the document, he made haste to explain himself.

"This paper," he began. "I was reading it to pass away the time."

The sheriff nodded.

"So," he observed. "As you have seen it is a confession in blank of the crime at Lebrun's."

He paused and added—

"If the criminal is wise he will sign it. This will save both time and expense for the parish. And afterward, in fixing his punishment, the judge may consider it."

Again Guidry tightened. Was this a challenge, a demand? But no. The sheriff had spoken too casually. And as he finished he had waved his hand as if to brush the paper aside. Now, seating himself upon the edge of the table, he proceeded at once to the matter in hand.

"You are here about this business?"

"Yes, Sheriff."

"You are one of the Comos?"

"I am."

"Your name?"

"Ras Guidry."

"And that is your costume there?"

"It is."

"Let me see it."

Unwrapping his bundle, Guidry laid the clown suit upon the table, spreading it out so as to exhibit the undamaged legs of the trousers. Yet for all his care the sheriff merely gave the garment a glance.

Curious, yet relieved, Guidry waited. Was it to be over so quickly and easily? In the end, picking up the costume, he reached for its paper wrapping.

"That is all then?" he ventured.

The sheriff surveyed him mildly. When he spoke it was with the same casual voice as before.

"One thing more," said he. "Your movements. When last were you in Pierre Lebrun's store?"

Guidry answered promptly. Foreseeing this particular question, he had prepared for it. At once he gave a date some two weeks before when he had bought cigarets in the presence of several customers.

For the first time since entering the room the sheriff exhibited a hint of interest. He leaned forward slightly as he spoke again.

"I see," said he. "Then you have not been in Pierre Lebrun's store in the past two weeks?"

"As I have said."

"Think carefully. It is important."

"It is not necessary to think as I have not been there."

"You are sure that you were not there at any time upon the day before Mardi Gras?"

"Have I not said so?"

"You can swear to this?"

"But of course."

"Then do so."

Half puzzled, half impatient, Guidry gave the required oath. He even raised his right hand as if to emphasize the words. When he had finished the sheriff relaxed visibly. Beyond doubt the affair was now over.

Again Guidry reached for the costume.

"That is all then?" he repeated.

This time the sheriff waited a moment before replying. He spoke carefully, spacing his words.

"Yes," said he, "that is all unless you will take the advice that I gave you when I came in. There, at your hand, is the confession. If you are wise you will save trouble and sign."

It was too much for Guidry. The blow, coming so swiftly, so unexpectedly, swept all his assurance away. Shaken, bewildered, he struggled for words.

"You mean—" he faltered, "you mean—"

SHERIFF FREMIN settled himself more comfortably upon the table top. Not only was he about to ride his own particular hobby; he also felt that success now lay in his forthcoming explanation.

"Guidry," said he, "you are like all those many criminals who have gone before you, those many more who will follow after you. They always forget something.

"In your case you forgot several things. It was clever of you to commit your crime as a Como, to leave the evidence of this behind you. Had you been content with this, you might have given me a chase. As it was you went on and piled cleverness on cleverness. And so, in less than two days, you have come into my hands.

"That was foolish to exchange costumes. In doing so you brought another into your plan, an outsider, an Italian, one at whose thoughts you could not even guess. How could you know that this outsider might not have full proof of his innocence? As it was he had this proof, and, in his fright, he brought it to me, together with the torn suit that you had left in his room.

"After this I made my plan. I did not, as you may think, get a list of the Comos from Cordova. Just then it would only have caused me to guess between seven men. Instead, I placed that notice in the coffee-house feeling sure that, of all those who answered it, the guilty man would be the first to come. I knew that he would be anxious, eager, that the innocent ones would hesitate, waiting for some one to lead.

"Thus, when you came so early this morning I was satisfied. So I held you off, and then went to search your room. And there I found— But perhaps it would be better to show you."

Slipping down from the table, the sheriff called—

"Jules!"

At once, as if in answer to some prearranged signal, a deputy appeared from the inner office. In his hands he carried a high-topped hunting-shoe, holding it gingerly as if it were some object that the slightest touch would harm.

All this time Guidry had listened in silence, his hands still fumbling with the useless costume. He was stunned, beaten, bereft of any defense or reply. For all his care his fine scheme had not stood the test of forty-eight hours.

Now when, taking the shoe from the deputy, the sheriff laid it before him, he merely blinked at it stupidly. It was his shoe, of course—one of the pair that he had worn with his costume. He had not thought of it since he had taken it off on coming from the store.

And that mud on the shoe, especially the small compact mass that had been packed in on the sole at the instep. Why was the sheriff pointing to it? With those streets his shoes would naturally be plastered with mud. That was why he had changed.

Guidry looked closer. Now he saw that, upon the dried gray cake at the instep, there was a scatter of small yellow grains. And beyond them, all but buried in the cake, was a thin line of steel.

Guidry's heart missed a beat to start pounding furiously. His head swam, his eyes blurred, there was a loud singing in his ears. And through this singing sifted the voice of the sheriff, faint yet mercilessly clear.

"You see," he was saying. "There is one of the things that you forgot. You did not think of that rice-seed on the floor. But I did, especially after I caught sight of the street outside.

"That is special seed. It has been identified. There is none like it save at Lebrun's and the place whence it came. And it did not come to Lebrun's until the day before Mardi Gras. Now you have sworn that you have not been to the store in the past two weeks. Jules will bear me out in this. He was waiting to hear you at that half opened door. How then did you get this seed on your shoe? It is something to explain.

"And that piece of knife-blade. When

we take it out you will find that it matches the broken stump in the knife of Pierre Lebrun. There again you forgot. Remembering the knife, perhaps you lost all thought of the blade. Yet who can blame you? Was it not a miracle that you should pick it up and carry it away in the mud of your shoe? Or was it one of those little things that wreck the cleverest plan?"

Breaking off, Sheriff Fremin laid down the shoe.

"Well, Guidry?" he questioned. "Is it enough? If so, there is the confession. Perhaps it will help you. Perhaps it will not. At least it is a chance and a chance is better than nothing. Who knows?"

And Guidry, the gambler, grasping this straw, groped for the pen and signed.

COLONEL JACK HAYS

by John L. Considine

ONE of the famous characters of the old West was Colonel Jack Hays, first commandant of the Texas Rangers.

It was in 1840 that the Republic of Texas, too poor to afford a standing army, made provision for a force of seventy-five Rangers. Men of long experience in Indian and frontier warfare and even United States Army officers applied for the command, but Hays, although but twenty-three, had already won such a name as a fighter against the Cherokees, Comanches and Mexicans that it was given to him.

Hays and his men furnished their own arms, horses and everything else except ammunition. Each Ranger carried a rifle, pistol and knife, a Mexican blanket, a wallet containing salt and ammunition, and perhaps a little *panola*—parched corn spiced and seasoned—to allay thirst. Thus equipped he spent months in the field. His saddle was his pillow, his blanket was his tent and bedding. Game was his food. Whatever more his palate craved was taken from the stores of routed Mexicans.

Thus living in Spartan simplicity, the Rangers faced danger with Spartan stoicism. The extent of the danger may be inferred from the fact that of a total of one hundred and forty young men in San Antonio the year the Rangers were organized, one hundred were killed in warfare. And in each year of their service protecting the Commonwealth of Texas half the number of the Rangers, for several successive years, gave up their lives. Their strength did not always stand at seventy-five. On occasion it rose to five hundred.

Throughout this period of slaughter Hays was wounded but thrice, and never seriously. Once while scouting at the head of twelve Rangers he surprized an equal number of Comanche scouts, suddenly rising up within sixty or eighty yards of them. They fled to a dogwood thicket and fortified themselves behind three oaks. Hays dismounted his men, stationed ten around the thicket and, taking two with him, entered it. A flight of arrows killed one, dangerously wounded the other and injured Hays' finger. He dragged the wounded man to safety and reentered the thicket, armed with a double-barreled shotgun and a pistol. Of three savages coming at him simultaneously he killed two with the shotgun and, reserving the pistol for an emergency, left the thicket, procured a Jaeger rifle, and returned to the attack. He fought three hours. Arrows fell thickly around him, but the density of the thicket and his frequent changes of position baffled his foes. Eventually but one Comanche remained. Armed with a gun and intrenched behind a log, he proved the most formidable of all. Hays, maneuvering in the brush, made repeated changes of position to get a good shot at him. The Indian at last upreared himself and their shots rang out simultaneously. Hays suffered a grazed shoulder, but the Comanche was killed.

What was regarded as the fiercest fight in the history of the Rangers was that at Cista's Creek, where Hays at the head of

fifteen men routed seventy-six well-armed and well-mounted savages, killing thirty-one and wounding most of the others.

Hays resigned the command of the Rangers at the outset of our war with Mexico, enlisted in the United States Army and rose to be a colonel of volunteers.

He joined the California gold rush in 1849 and in the spring of 1850 was elected the first sheriff of San Francisco. He ran as an independent against two other colonels, one the Democratic and the other the Whig nominee. He had to rely upon his reputation as against the force of two powerful political organizations. The issue was in doubt until the very day of election when Hays' appearance on a magnificent black charger in the Plaza, and his splendid horsemanship so captivated the imagination of the voters as to turn the tide.

As sheriff he had a stormy time. The Vigilantes in 1851 gave him much trouble. One of their leaders, Captain Ned Wakeman, at the head of an overwhelming mob took two prisoners away from him and lynched them.

Wakeman was a tough customer. He is the Captain Ned of whom Mark Twain speaks in "Roughing It" as going aboard another captain's ship in the Orient, taking from it a man who had killed one of Wakeman's negro sailors and hanging him from the yard-arm with his own hands.

He had but little respect for man-made laws and one of his specialties was running ships under court attachment out of the harbor.

The steamer *New Orleans* attached for sixty-five thousand dollars, was moored at the wharf in San Francisco. Captain Wakeman itched to add the scalp of Sheriff Hays to his belt. But Hays, cherishing a lively recollection of Wakeman's Vigilante exploit, was keenly watchful. One evening a deputy ran into Hays' office and panted—

"Something wrong down at the wharf, Colonel."

"What is it?"

"Steam up on the *Orleans*."

Hays galloped pell-mell to the water front where he found a sailor busy with the moorings of the *New Orleans*.

"Drop that," ordered Hays.

"Who are you?"

"The sheriff. You get."

The tar took a look at Hays and fled to the captain's cabin. Wakeman coolly came forth and picked up the rope.

"Wakeman," said Hays, "you will drop that line."

Wakeman looked at him defiantly.

"Suppose I choose to cast it off, what then?"

"I will kill you." The voice was low and the tones even, but there was no mistaking the look in Hays' eye.

The two men, about evenly matched in nerve, eyed each other for a minute, Wakeman with his hand on the hawser, Hays with his on his revolver-butt.

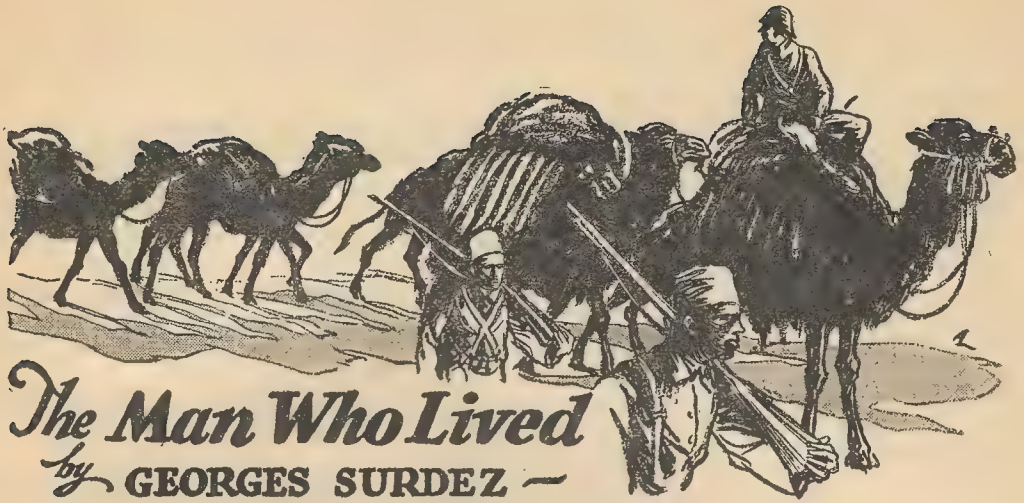
"I believe you would," said Wakeman at last. And the steamer remained at the wharf.

Hays retired from the sheriff's office at thirty-five to become one of the founders of Oakland. Then President Pierce made him United States Surveyor-General for California. He retired at the beginning of the Buchanan régime.

Four years later came the Pah Ute uprising in Nevada. At the first battle of Pyramid Lake the whites were ambushed and routed with great slaughter. Terror reigned and appeals for help went out. Hays became commandant of the force of Californians who went to the rescue. His command, numbering five hundred and forty-nine, met in rendezvous on the Carson River. Seated with his staff at supper around the sagebrush camp-fire that evening, he slyly slipped a can of peaches into the coals. When it blew up he yelled "Injuns" and gave the Comanche war-whoop. The staff were at first startled, then indignant at what they considered an undignified practical joke, but Hays explained that it was done purely for training. Still they suspected that the redness of his face was due to suppressed mirth.

A few days later he met the Pah Utes at the scene of the first battle and defeated them with terrific slaughter. Of his own force but two were killed and four wounded.

He was then but forty-three, but his life as a campaigner was ended. A quarter of a century later he passed away at his beautiful home at Piedmont, a residential suburb of Oakland, loaded with years and honors. His sister's son, John Hays Hammond, noted mining engineer, inherits much of the adventurous spirit which animated the redoubtable Jack Hays.



The Man Who Lived

by GEORGES SURDEZ

Author of "Red Shadow," "Dregs of Defeat," etc.

PAUL LARTAL was seated by the fire.

In the ruddy glow his close-cropped black hair contrasted sharply with the deep tan of his face. From the corner of his lips hung a forgotten cigaret, limp and moist. His gray eyes followed vague shapes and shadows in the embers.

Rolled in blankets on the other side of the fire were his two European companions. Captain Ruault, his chief, was still awake, smoking. Lartal could see the gold-ornamented sleeve lift, the tip of the cigaret glow, and the slow rise of the filmy smoke, blood-tinted by the flames. Ferisson, the sub-lieutenant, was asleep, his heavy breathing betraying the fatigue he had tried to conceal in his effort to keep up with his older, more experienced comrades.

The *Tirailleurs*—negro infantrymen—were sprawled about other fires—small heaps of dried roots which smoldered with fitful spurts of flame that caught on the clear steel of weapons, and were reflected in the polished brass ornaments of the uniforms. A great square had been formed with the animals, a first barrier against a surprize attack. On all four sides loomed the shapeless hulks of the kneeling camels. Here and there, an ugly, oblong head swung slowly at the end of an elongated, snaky neck. The weird cry that was at the same time a bleat, a squeal and a bellow, occasionally rose, followed by the angry hiss of the negro sentry.

In the depression of soil where the French detachment was camped, the darkness was felt almost as a solid material substance beyond the fires. The night closed down thickly. Above, jutting into the star-dusted immensity of the Saharian sky, the outline of the dune crests could be discerned.

From a far angle of the square came the monotonous, droning chant of a black private. The sonorous, liquid syllables were devoid of meaning to Lartal. But they swung on a strangely pleasing rhythm, a primitive cadence that at once lulled and stirred.

"Soura ka—Soura ka—ounara—bi—dia-liba!"

Was the man singing of love, of fighting, or merely of eating, drinking and sleeping, Lartal wondered idly.

Captain Ruault moved. He lifted himself on one elbow, his face turned toward Lartal. It was a good-looking, bronzed face; the dark eyes were deep, brilliant, with a hint of softness in spite of the metallic, hard quality of the glance. Ruault was a young man, thirty-one. Yet his hair was graying at the temples. He shook off the blankets and circled the fire. He sat down beside Lartal, cradling his knees within his arms.

"Admiring the stars, Lartal?"

"Yes."

"Luckier than Ferisson. He seems dead tired."

"First trip in the desert," Lartal pointed out. "New to prolonged loneliness—and danger. Twenty-two. A kid."

Ruault nodded.

Not a sound came from outside the camp. It was as if the earth had died.

"The patrols should be here in the morning—with news," the captain said, presently.

"Yes. They must have cut across the Berabers' trail somewhere. Camels don't fly, not even those of our fast-moving friends."

The detachment under Ruault, fifty-five *Tirailleurs*, had been sent from Timbuktu into the desert to guard the caravan road from the salt marshes to the Niger banks. While moving about aimlessly north of Araouan Well, word had come that a band of Berabers, Moroccan raiders, was operating west of Bir Ousman. These pirates of the Saharian trails were between fifty and one hundred rifles in strength.

Ruault's orders were definite. He must protect the caravans—pursue and destroy raiding bands. Not a small assignment, for the raiders might come from three different angles; the more numerous from the Tafilalet oases of Morocco, many from the Tuareg camps, and others from the Tripolitan hinterland.

At first thought, it would appear impossible to locate an enemy in a waste of sand and rocky flats. But the Moors and Tuareg were men, even if experts in desert lore. They must drink. Their animals must be watered. And so the French roamed from well to well, ever alert, hoping to come across a fresh clue that would end in a sight of the enemy.

Lartal was particularly fitted for the work.

Although new to that part of the Sahara under political control of the Sudan, he had served three years in the camel corps, the Saharian companies that preserve the peace in the North, in Algerian dominion. He was not only an officer, but also an instructor, presumed to teach the negroes to become a match for the desert warriors.

The negro resumed his singing.

"*Soura—ka—*"

"What is he saying, Captain?" Lartal asked.

Ruault had spent eight years in the Sudan, commanding blacks. He spoke Bambara, Ouloff, and the Pheul and Dioula dialects.

" 'The Moors—the Moors have swept down to the Niger—' "

"They still remember those days."

"No wonder," Ruault declared. "Three years ago I fought Moroccan prowlers south of the marshes near Timbuktu. So you see it was not so long ago."

"And last year you were in this vicinity, were you not, Captain?"

"Yes."

"With Lieutenant Tranchet. He was my friend," Lartal announced abruptly. "I might say, my best friend."

"A fine man."

"We were as close as brothers."

RUAULT tossed the stub of his cigaret on the coals, and watched the paper shrivel, vanish, the tobacco turn to grayish ashes before he spoke.

"I might call Tranchet my friend, too." He paused reflectively. "We, also, received information concerning a band of Beraber raiders. But instead of having over fifty men, we had a scant twenty-five. The rest were on a wild-goose chase, under a sergeant, near the Bu Djeheba well. We spent a week trying to locate them. Then, perhaps a couple of hundred miles southeast of this spot, we sighted them. They showed fight. They were encumbered with loot and prize animals which they were unwilling to abandon. There were more than we had been given to understand.

"We attacked, nevertheless. The fight did not last long, but it was hot for a few minutes. When the *Tirailleurs* got among them with the bayonet, it was soon over. But Tranchet was dead. I carried the body back to Timbuktu."

"I saw his grave," said Lartal. "He wrote me before starting out, Captain."

Ruault glanced up quickly.

"Yes?"

"He felt that the trip would be his last."

"I think any intelligent man would have felt the same. The chances are against us in the desert. The others know more than we do about the country. They can live on less food—less water. They are as well armed as our men; as brave, perhaps braver. An officer is conspicuous, an inviting target."

Ruault indicated the darkness outside the camp.

"The land seems to sweat death."

Lartal smiled.

"You are married, Captain?"

"Yes. Six months ago, in Saint Louis, on the coast."

"You married Mademoiselle Delmas, daughter of a treasurer?"

"Yes."

"I had the honor of meeting her, in France." And, as Ruault did not make comment, Lartal went on, "It was Tranchet who introduced me."

"Tranchet introduced me to her family," Ruault stated. He stifled a yawn. "We'd better imitate young Ferisson."

"Yes, it's nearly ten o'clock," Lartal agreed.

He unhooked his watch from his chain and handed it to Ruault—

"You recall it?"

"M. T.—Maurice Tranchet."

"Tranchet showed it to me when he came back from leave to the military academy. He took it with him to Algeria. Then he came down to the Sudan, and again went into the desert. His mother sent it to me, in the desert. Here I am in the desert again, after passing through the Sudan in my turn. The watch is ticking away. Outlived him, may outlive me."

The captain nodded casually.

"Yes, metal outlasts flesh. Good night."

He again circled the fire, wrapped himself in blankets, feet stretched to the blaze.

Lartal was not sleepy. The long rides did not exhaust him. His muscles had become accustomed to the peculiar strain. With Ruault it was a different matter. His work, ten months of each year, consisted of routine patrols in the Sahel, a few miles north of Timbuktu, where the daily trips were short. Long trips lasting over many days, such as this, and that other journey from which Tranchet had not come back alive, were the exception.

The lieutenant placed a cloth cap on his head, for the air cooled after the heat of the sun left the sand, and went to inspect the sentries. He was pleased to find the men awake. He had heard much of the negroes' carelessness when on guard duty, but saw nothing tonight to justify the reports. After informing the nearest sentry of his intention, he went outside the camp to walk in the open.

He enjoyed keenly the feel of the night air on his face, the intense impression of being alone, aloof from all else but his thoughts.

He had waited long for this conversation with Ruault. Always before, Ferisson had been about, or something else had interfered. But now that he had achieved his end, a private talk with the captain, he had obtained little satisfaction. Ruault had spoken guardedly.

THIRTY months before, Tranchet and Lartal had spent a leave together, in France. And they had met Mademoiselle Delmas. Lartal thought the girl rather attractive; slender, very young, with large, liquid brown eyes, and hair that was nearer blond than red; fresh full red lips, and a pretty smile that revealed even teeth.

At first Tranchet had shown a similar soberness of judgment. Then, in Lartal's opinion, he had suddenly become a raving idiot. He spoke of nothing else but little Yvonne. Lartal sympathized hypocritcally and tried his best to get his friend away, out of danger.

He pointed out to Tranchet that for a young officer to marry was folly, making evident that Tranchet's pay combined with his diminutive private income would not be sufficient to live upon.

All this was useless argument. He soon realized that Yvonne regarded favorably the blond, broad-shouldered young officer, with the prestige of far lands to add to his handsome person. At last the leave came to an end.

Tranchet went back to the desert. When Yvonne's father took her down to Senegal, Tranchet asked for a transfer to the Sudan. Timbuktu is not near Saint Louis du Senegal, but it is nearer than the Tripolitan border.

In Saint Louis, Tranchet had met Ruault, who was also on his way to Timbuktu, and who was to be his superior. Two weeks had passed.

And then Lartal, thousands of miles away, was made the confidant of a great sorrow. Ruault was making devastating progress with Mademoiselle Delmas. He was but three years older than Tranchet, a captain, decorated, with a private income that would place the woman he married above financial worry. The parents openly preferred him. And Yvonne, so Tranchet had written, was not very, very determined to keep the vague promise she had given the lieutenant.

Lartal had answered the letter, striving

to be diplomatic but not altogether concealing his opinion that a young lady who was impressed by a fortune, even if her name was Yvonne, was not worth much worry. To him, the entire affair appeared utterly simple; to be dismissed and entered into Tranchet's budget under the head of valuable experience for the future.

Tranchet had been curt in his next letter, visibly offended that his best friend should have questioned the mental reactions of the girl he loved. Several letters were exchanged before cordial, free flowing expressions were once again employed. But Tranchet and Lartal had starved and thirsted together. And Lartal had reasoned that as one is patient with a madman, he should be patient with a man in love. He had covered pages with consolations, with sound, hard advice. He had read with resignation Tranchet's lengthy effusions.

Then the two rivals arrived in Timbuktu.

It seemed that Ruault was corresponding with Yvonne. Tranchet had to be content with an occasional note, friendly in wording, sent him in pity, as a bone is thrown to a starving cur. And Ruault was unbearable. How any one could esteem the man was beyond Tranchet's comprehension. A braggart, without sufficient delicacy of feeling to appreciate a flower-like girl like Yvonne.

Later, Tranchet wrote that Ruault and he had talked the matter over. Ruault was determined that he would not be the one to drop out of the race. The discussion had taken place in Ruault's quarters, and Lartal was given to understand that some sort of scuffle had occurred.

"In fact—" Tranchet wrote—"if the orderly had not rapped upon the door, I don't know what would have happened. The man pitied me, consoled me. A pig—"

Then had come Tranchet's last letter.

He informed Lartal that Ruault and he were to be sent into the desert, on the Taoudeni route. That was for the best. The only obstacle that had stood between the solution of the problem—a duel, had been the obvious fact that Yvonne would be involved in a scandal. As for Ruault, he was as tired of the whole business as was Tranchet. He had been unable to obtain an answer. Yvonne could not make up her mind. That was a good sign, Tranchet believed, when one thought of the pressure brought to bear by her loving, greedy parents.

Tranchet's firm, large handwriting had covered the pages:

"The Berabers may settle the problem, and one of us may be killed. But whatever happens, only one of us will come back. One will live. That is agreed. And when I stop and think calmly, I believe I will be the one to drop out. It would be best for her. After my death she would have no difficulty in choosing. And in contact with her, Ruault might change into something approaching a gentleman. He has money. Poverty is bitter, even near poverty. But while I'm alive, I can't relinquish. We will be alone out there. The blacks don't count—"

Lartal read the letter with conflicting emotions. He at first believed it to be a joke. But the tone was serious. Supposing the letter had strayed into a stranger's hands? There was enough to shatter both men's careers. Officers were sent out to serve France, not to work out their private quarrels. Mademoiselle Delmas influencing the fate of caravans! A splendid scheme for Tranchet to evolve!

Months passed. Then came the news of Tranchet's death. Killed outright, by a bullet through the skull, in a bayonet charge against the Berabers. Ruault had come back famous. Tidings of his bloody, savage victory, had reached even far away France, where as a general rule little enough interest is shown in the men hewing an empire for the Republic.

Ruault was granted special leave of absence. He had been severely shaken by hardship. Instead of sailing for France, he had halted in Saint Louis. The wedding of Mademoiselle Yvonne Delmas, daughter of *Trêsorier-Payeur* Aristide Delmas, to the distinguished Captain Joseph-Marie Ruault, Knight of the Legion of Honor, the incomparable hero of Tebursk Well, took place.

Lartal was in France, expecting an order for his transfer to the Sudanese side of the Sahara, when he read this news. He had felt the loss of Tranchet keenly. Before going down to Bordeaux to take the steamer for Senegal, he had a duty to perform. He must see Tranchet's mother. She had written him, asking him to come. Lartal was aware that the interview would but freshen her grief. Nevertheless, he set out on the tedious journey.

He found Madame Tranchet bewilderingly courageous. Lartal did not experience

that uncomfortable, helpless feeling he had dreaded. She was not old, in spite of her white hair. Maurice had resembled her; the same clean-cut features, high forehead, long nose, and sensitive mouth. She might have been fifty-two or -three. But she was old, immensly old in the sense that nothing remained for her in life. She was bereft of her husband and her only son.

LARTAL soon realized that Tranchet had written his mother concerning Yvonne. He had even told her of his understanding with Captain Ruault before setting out with the detachment. What an agony of dread she must have felt before the news had come! Which one would survive?

"What do you think of it, Paul?" Madame Tranchet asked.

"That he was—very unhappy."

"And what do you think happened, out there?"

"I think that they both came to the conclusion that they had made asses of themselves, and settled down seriously to the business at hand."

"Paul—" Madame Tranchet resumed—"if Maurice was killed by the enemy, I have no regret—although I suffer. I knew he would be a soldier, I brought him up with that in mind, and at the same time trained myself as well. He was a good soldier, wasn't he? I knew all the time that he was taking the chance of dying young, and not in a soft bed. Listen to me, Paul. You're going down there. You will see this Captain Ruault. Talk to him, draw him out. I want to know—" she broke off. "Sometimes I believe he was—murdered."

Lartal lifted his hand in protest:

"I would not hold such a thought, Madame Tranchet. Captain Ruault is a brave man."

Madame Tranchet smiled pityingly.

"You have never been in love, have you, Paul?"

"Oh, yes, many times."

"Many times! That's it, never once. A brave man will do a dirty action when in love. Even a brave man such as Ruault."

Lartal realized that it was useless to contradict her. He gestured vaguely, helplessly.

"I want you to find out, Paul—"

"I'll try—"

"Your promise?"

Lartal hesitated uncertainly. But only for a moment. What could he say? What could he do?

"My word of honor, Madame Tranchet."

He had left Madame Tranchet with the very clear knowledge that he had assumed a difficult and somewhat ridiculous task. He could not well imagine himself stopping Captain Ruault on the street, and asking him with a strained, polite, apologetic smile, "About my friend, Tranchet—was he killed by the Berabers, or in a duel? Or did you assassinate him?"

The problem cost him many sleepless nights on the trip to Timbuktu.

From Tranchet's virulent letters he imagined Ruault to be a red-faced, piggy fat man with squinty eyes. Instead he was introduced to a tall, broad-shouldered officer, with grave manners and a warm, deep voice, who questioned him on the methods employed to train the camel corps men in Algeria, and spoke of the problems confronting an officer commanding blacks in the arid regions.

Later, Lartal discovered that Ruault was considered a ruthless officer. He spared neither his white subordinates nor the *Tirailleurs*. His body seemed to be made of forged steel. And he had a very keen mind. He expected the same qualities in others. During the last campaigns against Samory, he had performed deeds of sublime valor. Yet he was cautious, when caution was called for. A splendid future lay ahead of him.

A matter of speculation, as to how his marriage would affect his courage. Married men often became sedate, less likely to risk their precious hides in nasty corners. There were exceptions, but those were officers who had been married—long. Ruault was newly wedded, probably still very much in love.

And then Lartal that been ordered to join Ruault's detachment bound for the north—

SOUNDS from the camp recalled Lartal to the present. The sentries were being changed, therefore he had stayed in the open two full hours, although it seemed only a few minutes since he had spoken with Ruault. He must go back and rest, for they might go far the next day.

He reentered the square, passing the sentry with a brief word.

A short distance away, the group of *Tirailleurs* on guard duty from twelve until

four were gathered around a fire larger than the other fires. The blacks were huddled under blankets. At three in the afternoon, the temperature had been one hundred and twenty-five. It had now dropped below seventy.

The men were puffing at their short clay pipes, and talking in low tones. Kitosso, a corporal, had his face turned toward Lartal, who stood unseen in the shadows. Kitosso possessed a dignity of bearing in keeping with the double red wool stripes on his sleeves. He was the center of attention. The others were simply commenting on his statements.

Words came to Lartal clearly—unintelligible words. Three syllables repeated constantly in the narrative caught the attention. "*Soura ka!*" Then an interval of meaningless speech, and again, "*Soura ka!—Soura ka!*"

Soura ka, the Moors, the Men of the Desert. For centuries before the coming of the French to the Sudan, the ancestors of these negroes had been virtually slaves to the Moors. A lone Moor, a lone Targui, could ride his camel into a thickly populated village, take the best food and the prettiest maid without being molested, so intense was the terror inspired by the veiled riders of the void.

The black soldiers followed their French chiefs into the Sahara, as they had followed them in the Sudan against Samory, as they had followed them in the Dahomean bush and in far-off Madagascar. But not one of them came without a sensation of dread in his heart.

Kitosso was the first to see the lieutenant, and rose to salute. Lartal stepped forward into the full light.

"I hear much talk of the Moors," he said. "What is it all about?"

Kitosso pursed his thick lips, moved his head in a doubting gesture.

"*Soura ka* savvy fighting too much," he stated.

"*Tirailleurs* fight, too," Lartal remarked. "I have newly come among you, but I know you are fighters. The captain, who knows both you and the Moors, says so. Do not worry."

"We talk," Kitosso assured him. "But we fight."

"Yes," approved another black. "We have three *Toubabu* to follow!"

"*I ni oula*," Lartal concluded.

They chorused an answer, grinning with pleasure that he had learned their night salutation.

Back at the officer's fire, he removed his boots, his coat, and loosened the other garments. Then, he pulled the blankets over his body.

Three *Toubabu*—three white men! The blacks felt confident because they had three white men to lead them. Yet they were to fight a white enemy, men armed as well as they, and perhaps better mounted. They would fight, when the time came, fight well, as always, in spite of inherited fear. Moors and Tuareg were formidable foes for them. The list of disaster suffered by black troops at the hands of desert tribes was already long: Aube massacred near Timbuktu with all his men, Bonnier's column wiped out at dawn, Siguiri by the Niger, where de Chivigné's Spahis had been cut to pieces.

Lartal thought longingly of the wiry, silent Arabs who had followed him in the "true" desert, through the Chech and Iguidi Dunes. Ultimately, such men would have to be employed on the Sudanese side of the Sahara. In the meanwhile—

Lartal dismissed his worries with an effort of the will.

He could hear Ferisson's breathing, strong, regular.

The familiar sounds of the camp were comforting. The stars gleamed, millions of miles up in the black sky. The stars he had watched so many nights, when Tranchet, who was dead now, had been lying near him by the fire.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, opened his eyes. Although he did not recall falling asleep, the fires had burned low and the feel of approaching day was in the air. Captain Ruault was bending near him.

"Wake up, Lartal—"

"What's happened?"

"News."

Lartal was wide awake instantly.

"The patrols came back?"

"No. But Fakko Diop dispatched a messenger on foot at sundown. The fellow just got here."

Lartal glanced at the *Tirailleur* sent by Fakko Diop, the sergeant in command of the scouting party. He was still panting from the long run. He had discarded all clothing save the *bila*—loin-cloth—and his sole weapon was a naked bayonet. When the lieutenant's eyes rested upon him he

grinned with visible pride. He knew that he had done a brave deed, running at night in the dunes with the chance that he might miss the fires of the detachment, and lose himself forever.

"Fakko Diop has found fresh traces of the Berabers," the captain went on. "Not forty-eight hours old. Evidently they have many stolen animals with them."

"Is he sure? We may run into a small party of traders, as we did once before."

Ruault offered for inspection, a bandolier, with a few cartridges remaining. Lartal glanced at the base of one of the cartridges. A famous European make. The ornaments on the bandolier were unmistakably of Moroccan origin.

"Looks like a sure thing this time, Captain."

"Fakko Diop picked it up among the ashes of their fires. There were other indications, this man says, as unmistakable."

"When do we start?"

"Immediately. We can join Fakko Diop in a couple of hours, and by tomorrow night have these fellows located."

He spoke in Bambara to the messenger, who grinned once more, and left for the guards' fire. The bugler came forward soon after.

THE brassy notes strung out, and everywhere men rose to their feet, reached for their equipment. The camel drivers were busy in the animal lines, kicking, cursing in mingled French, Bambara and Arabic. Sudden pandemonium followed quiet.

A touch on his elbow; the cook, with a pot of coffee and a tin cup. A few feet away Ruault was draining the hot liquid in long gulps. How many mornings such as this had Lartal known? Many. Followed by the race into the dunes, or across the plateaux, a sight of blue and white figures, then the drone of bullets.

"Ferisson! Ferisson!" Ruault called.

The sub-lieutenant was still asleep, undisturbed by the uproar. Lartal leaned over him and shook him gently.

"Wake up, old man, wake up!"

Ferisson sat up and yawned.

"Not light yet," he remarked.

"Diop reports the Berabers, Ferisson."

"——!" Ferisson exclaimed, scrambling to his feet. "You don't say!"

He laced his boots with trembling fingers. Lartal answered his swift questions. The young man's enthusiasm made him smile. True this was to be Ferisson's first engagement, the moment he had waited for, for many years, the moment he had probably dreamed of while plodding faithfully at the Academy, and while doing the routine duties of the barracks.

"How many?" Ferisson asked.

"Fifty—sixty—"

"This isn't another false scent?"

"No."

"Allah is great!"

Ferisson made no attempt to conceal his elation. His pale-blue eyes, usually appearing in his red face as cold as bits of porcelain, now glinted with a vivid light. The almost colorless mustache, too scanty to conceal his red lips, lifted belligerently. He was tall and strongly built, bigger than either Lartal or Ruault. And he was eager. Lartal speculated— What a leader he would make two or three years hence when he had been seasoned, toughened!

A formidable concert of bellows rose from the pack camels, who possibly had hoped, against all hope that never again would heavy loads be placed upon them. The voices of the drivers became more shrill. An animal escaped, ran through the camp, scattering sand and ashes, dragging his master along the ground, the pack scattered over several yards. A half dozen *Tirailleurs*, chattering, laughing, caught him.

The sun rose, and the tiny white clouds hanging in the western sky vanished swiftly, as if a sponge had been passed over the pitiless blue. The blue uniforms, the red *chechias* crowning each negro, the colorful garments of the servants, formed a picturesque mosaic of violent colors against the light ocher of the dune-flank. The dying fires emitted straggling pillars of white smoke, that rose, slender as the trunks of dwarf palms, and spread, upon reaching the level of the dune crests, into a translucent canopy that soon shredded into the thinning mist and disappeared, as the light morning wind swept warmly from horizon to horizon.

"Ready, Lieutenant," said Kitosso, first of all the non-coms.

"Ready, Captain," Lartal called.

"Ready," echoed Ferisson, already mounted, at the head of his section.

"All right. Let's go!" Ruault answered.

The hoofs of the camels sank softly into the crumpling sand.

The captain rode ahead, his red and white *burnous* draped on his wide shoulders, falling gracefully over the saddle. He rode with stirrups, as did Ferisson. Lartal had learned long ago to sit a camel with his feet crossed upon the animal's neck.

Long shadows slid to the left of the riders. The low dunes, brown and gold and ocher in hue, were at some spots almost white, glistening as if covered with snow crystals.

"*Gname—garbol*" called a driver, cursing his animal.

"Faster—" Ruault ordered.

The stride lengthened, and the shadows leaped on, enormous and distorted, leaping the gaps between the dunes in a single surging stride.

THE sun had swung around the horizon from east to west.

The detachment now progressed across a vast flat area, strewn with large, smooth pebbles, spaced so evenly that one might believe them laid by hand on the soil. Far off, miles to the left and right, the profile of sharp-crested dunes made a delicate, bluish tracery against the sky.

Ruault halted his mount and signaled to Lartal to come near.

"You have seen the tracks, Lartal. How many do you think there are?"

At ten o'clock, the messenger sent by Fakko Diop had indicated the spot where the sergeant had camped with his men. A rag fluttered from the extremity of the cleaning-rod of a rifle, held upright by a heap of stones. Diop had realized that Ruault would expect him to hold his ground, and had wished to indicate that, for some reason, he had decided to proceed alone for a while longer.

Shortly after the noon halt, traces of another camp had been found, with unmistakable evidence that the men from Morocco had stopped there. The trail was growing warmer. It was seen by the tracks that Fakko Diop and his men were following the Moroccans. Ruault had raised his hand, and waved for the detachment to move on. And since then, the monotonous stride had kept up.

Ruault had evidently decided, after considerable thought, to ask his more experienced subordinate's opinion as to the number of raiders.

"Difficult to judge, Captain," Lartal said in reply. "I don't know how many animals were stolen and how many bore warriors. It is fairly certain that the average number of men around each fire, was four. And I counted sixteen ash heaps."

"Enough to put up a rather stiff resistance—"

"But not enough to halt us."

"No. As long as the odds are not two to one, we can handle those birds. They lack cohesion."

"Much depends on their leader," Lartal went on. "Several of the chieftains have acquired considerable skill brushing up against the Saharian companies. They learn swiftly. North of Beni Adam two years ago I engaged a bunch of Moroccans. I congratulated myself when they began to break, for we had a choice lot of camels. Well, they executed as neat a retreat *en échelon* as you have ever seen. I kept after them thirty-three hours—there was a full moon—and got nowhere—"

"And—" Ruault picked up— "your water gave out. You had a —— of a time making the nearest well. Thirteen men killed out of thirty."

Lartal looked at the captain in surprize. The engagement had not been sufficiently glorious to be recorded in print, for the result had been a draw, not a victory.

"Tranchet told me—" Ruault went on.

"Tranchet could tell a story well," Lartal said.

"Remarkably well. A charming companion—"

Lartal looked at Ruault steadily. Was the man sarcastic? There was no certain answer to be obtained from the officer's immobile mask. As for his voice, it was, as always, calm, warm, with its own particular vibrating quality.

Then Ruault spoke up abruptly:

"We will issue one hundred and fifty additional cartridges to each man. With the hundred already in their cartridge-boxes, that will make two hundred and fifty. It might become difficult, under fire, to distribute ammunition."

"There's the added load to be considered," Lartal objected.

"Too small to be serious—and in any case, the extra cartridges will probably be used up by the time the swift movement is required. A black on the firing-line makes short work of a hundred rounds. He likes the noise. Makes him feel as if he's doing a

lot." Ruault glanced over his shoulder—

"Here's Ferisson."

The sub-lieutenant was approaching rapidly. He slackened his speed when beside the two.

"Isn't that marvelous?" he exclaimed. "Ahead!"

Several miles away, but seeming near in the deceiving clearness of the dry atmosphere, dunes closed down to the level of the table-land. The wind from the north had lifted. It blew the fine sand into the air in an impalpable cloud, through which the sun's rays slanted, coloring each minute particle with intense hues. It was a magnificent spectacle; the rocky flat waste, from which rose enormous piles of sandstone, the play of shadows, and that rainbow mist ahead, like a veil of multi-colored gauze stretched before the dunes.

"Like a beautiful woman's shoulders through sheer silk!" Ferisson pointed out. "The dunes seem to open up to give us passage—" Ferisson indicated a wide space between the high sand barriers.

"I understand that this formation is found again, more pronounced, farther north. The desert people call it, at that farther point, *Fom el Alba,* the Gate of the Heart, a name that should appeal to your romantic nature, Ferisson. Before the tremendous shake-up of the earth's crust, the river Niger is supposed to have flowed through that passage, straight north, to form the great lake in the depression called El Jouf, the sink—the pit," Ruault informed him.

"The Niger does appear determined to flow northward, until it loops down toward the Gulf of Benin," Ferisson agreed.

Ruault, who seemed quite well read on the subject, explained various theories to Ferisson, with more patience than he usually showed.

LARTAL allowed Ruault and Ferisson to pass on, and lagged behind until Kitosso came up to him. He employed the following hour in familiarizing himself with the intricacies of the negro's tongue. Kitosso was a good teacher. The corporal was explaining an intricate rule, when he suddenly ceased speaking.

"Diop!"

Lartal looked ahead. He counted six diminutive silhouettes moving on the flank of a dune, in the distance. Without an order being given, as if pushed forward by a single impulse of curiosity, of longing to know, the entire detachment quickened the pace.

Soon Ruault was talking with the sergeant.

Fakko Diop was a veteran non-com wearing three enlistment chevrons. Several decorations gleamed on the breast of his faded blue tunic. A gaunt neck emerged from the collar, and his wool was almost white. But what he had lost in youth and strength, he had gained in wisdom. He spoke good French and scorned to take advantage of his native tongue.

"We have not allowed them to see us, Captain," he reported. "They are still a day's riding ahead, even if you go fast, very fast. They have not much water left, for several camels have died. We saw the carrions. They must stop at the next well, tomorrow night."

"Thou didst well, Fakko Diop," Ruault complimented.

"I did nothing. They left behind enough for a blind man to see."

Ruault gave the signal to go on. Camp would not be made until sunset.

"What breed of men are they?" Lartal asked of Diop.

"Berabers. Of the Dui Menia Tribe, I think."

"Good warriors, eh?"

"But wait until tomorrow night," Diop suggested, "and thou wilt know, Lieutenant!"

FIRES.

They glowed like three great rubies in the velvety black of the night. The Berabers*—the Moors—were within striking distance. Skinny Hercules, they were, with the sinuous

* The Berabers form but one of the tribes inhabiting the Oases of the Tafilalet and Draa regions. By extension, the name is applied to all raiders from those oases: Doui Menia, Ouled Djerir, Ouled ben Ghazy, Ait Khebbache and others.

While not all Berabers, they are all Berber stock, the Lybian Race. In their tongue, no difference exists in the pronunciation of Berber, name of the race, and Beraber, a tribal name. In Arabic, the words are written alike. The French, with the European craving for precision in classification, have varied the spelling to distinguish the tribe from the race, the branch from the tree.

The Berbers' courage and ruthlessness have been known for centuries. From the word Berber, through Greek and Latin, has come the word Barbarian. Lartal knew that they had changed little in twenty-five hundred years. Customs and dress were the same, save that having long fought to live, they now lived to fight. They scorned plow and loom, accepted but one gift of civilization—the magazine rifle, Lebel, Mauser or Winchester, regardless of make, provided only that "it be a worthy killing weapon."

might of snakes, the agility of panthers.

Ruault was prone on the sand, not four feet away. But Lartal could scarcely distinguish him. It was a splendid night, a most favorable night for what they were to attempt. Lartal's hands quivered, his lips were dry.

Three fires meant ten or twelve men, therefore the party in sight was not the bulk of the *rezzou*—raiding band. These men had been left behind as a rear guard, a fact which evidenced a good leader. With a good leader, the Berabers would acquit themselves well. Yes, the next few hours would be rather full.

Lartal was to take a group of *Tirailleurs*, leap upon the Moors, wipe them out without firing a shot. Then, the same sort of attack would be launched, by the entire detachment, upon the main body of the Berabers.

Ruault reached out and pulled gently at his sleeve. Together, they left the top of the dune that had served as observation post, and slid down the declivity, toward the waiting *Tirailleurs*. No fires had been lighted. The captain now lighted a cigaret and held the match for Lartal. Their hands met.

"There's but one chance in a hundred, Captain, of brushing out that bunch without giving warning. But I'll try it, by ——, I'll try it!"

"How many men will you take?"

"Ten should be enough. Ten and Kitosso. Kitosso seems a dependable fellow, Ruault."

The name had slipped off his tongue readily, instead of the formal title. The captain did not seem to notice. He went on speaking, his voice strained, throaty.

"Take Ferisson with you, Lartal. He must learn how—that is done, some time."

"All right. Are you there, Ferisson?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"Leave your helmet behind; either we'll come back and get the helmets after it's over—or we won't need them. They show up white."

Lartal took a service rifle, with the bayonet in place.

"I'd like to take my sword, Lieutenant," Ferisson suggested.

"A rifle would be better. But—all right. But no scabbard—nothing that can rattle on you. Crawl behind Kitosso, touch his heel. Like that, you won't get lost."

"Men ready," Kitosso informed him.

Leaving nothing to chance, knowing sometimes that blacks disregard instructions, deliberately or through a misunderstanding, he passed his hands over every man. A tin cup might bring failure. The blacks had discarded their tunics and sandals. They wore nothing save the baggy trousers and the cartridge belts.

"No bayonet scabbards, Kitosso," Lartal again warned.

"No, Lieutenant."

"We're off, Captain."

"Good luck, Lartal. Good luck, Ferisson."

Lartal led the way up the dune flank, reached the crest, and saw the fires again. Three fires glowing like big red rubies.

He slid down the opposite slope, the sand slithering noiselessly. He heard his men breathe behind him. There must be no more talking from now on. Even a whisper carried far in the stillness.

He walked, bending low.

The fires were farther away than he had thought. Minutes passed. A touch on his elbow. He reached out, and felt a cloth sleeve. Ferisson, the fool, who had come near him, instead of following Kitosso! What was the use of showing displeasure now? Lartal sensed that the sub-lieutenant was trembling. Excitement, no doubt. He reached out and endeavored to steady him with a comforting tap. Ferisson was young. Twenty-two.

A plaintive, continuous drone reached the ears. A flute—one of the Moors was playing a flute. If the men by the fires were listening to the flute, their ears would not strain for sounds from the open desert.

Now he was close enough to see shapes moving, intercepting the glow of the fires in brief silhouettes. His left hand slipped up the rifle until it struck against the end of the strap. He held the butt end high, and crawled on his knees and free hand. Nearer. He could count the men around the fires. One, two, three, six, seven, ten. There were ten. Ferisson, Kitosso, himself, and the ten *Tirailleurs*, thirteen! Bad luck? When there are thirteen men against ten men it is bad luck for ten men! Who did he know who was superstitious, believed in the ill luck of thirteen? Tranchet—

Madame Tranchet and her suspicions—how unimportant. Nothing, less than nothing. The whole world was here, in the

dunes, in the light of those three fires. Twenty-three men. There were those who would not live to see the next sun. Who would live?

A stifled cough. Not Ferisson, but one of the blacks. He would never know who was the guilty man. Had they heard ahead? No. The flute was still whining. He tried to estimate the distance. What was the rule? At so many yards, a man can distinguish the buttons of the uniforms, at so many yards the features of a man's face. But that rule was made for daylight. At night—all was different.

He was very near, now, so near that he could see the camels, kneeling, several yards away from the fires. Also, the red light flooded toward him. He could see Ferisson's face plainly, the single gold braid on his sleeve, and the russet shine of his revolver holster.

Were those men blind, and deaf?

"I must give the signal in another moment," he thought. "Before they see."

He rose, still bending over. The firelight leaped upon the slender, long blade of his bayonet, as lightning leaps along a steel wire. He straightened and ran forward. A man jumped up before him, with a comical, far flinging of the arms. Lartal lunged, staggered, recovered his blade. The *Tirailleurs* were leaping in, like sooty phantoms, grim, silent.

The man who was playing the flute half turned, braced one hand upon the ground to rise. Lartal struck from above, bringing all his weight on the rifle. Ferisson was rising, disentangling himself from his dying opponent. Lartal tried to free his own bayonet, but it had twisted. He reached down to free it from the barrel.

Then a blue-clad turbaned figure, that seemed impossibly tall, loomed above. A flash of a knife, and a nervous hand gripped his throat. Another blue man, near at hand— He freed his neck with his right hand, and extended his rifle to ward off the attack. He fell, backward—where had those two come from? Why had the *Tirailleurs* not attended to them? Some one kneeled upon his chest. A knife rose high, gripped by a hand at the end of a thin, brown arm, from which the sleeve fell to the shoulder. The end, he thought. He could not move—

Dry, vibrating, a shot rang out. Another. A weight fell on his head. The light was obscured. It was Kitosso who dragged the body away, and Lartal rolled on his side, rose to his knees, then stood. Ferisson was near, holding his revolver.

"We didn't see those fellows. They were with the camels, perhaps asleep," he said coolly. "I hated to shoot, but—" He broke off suddenly—

"Listen!"

Several shots rang out, at regular intervals. The main body of the Berabers was signaling, using a code agreed upon.

"Kitosso, any of our men hurt?" Lartal asked.

"No, Lieutenant."

Soon Ruault appeared, followed by the *Tirailleurs*, leading their camels.

"Couldn't keep them from firing, could you?" he asked.

"I fired," Ferisson said.

"He saved my life, Captain," Lartal explained. "I had two of them on me."

"I guess surprize is out of the question now," Ruault said shortly, and then as an afterthought—

"You did quite right, of course, Ferisson."

RUAULT was plainly irritated. Thumbs hooked in his belt, he paced back and forth with short, nervous steps. The *Tirailleurs* were gathering the bodies of the Moors. Their code was not that of the white man. They stripped the corpses of everything that aroused their cupidity, or even a passing desire. Neither Lartal nor Ruault interfered.

"I believe I'll leave the camels here with Fakko Diop and ten men," Ruault said. "That will leave us forty-five men to operaate with."

Lartal nodded.

"The well ahead is known as Bir el Malek. It's dug deep in the ground and does not give much water. We gained on those fellows last night and today, so that they have not been there more than five hours. How long do you think they'll need to get enough for all their animals? They can't go without water."

"Fourteen hours, I should judge," Lartal offered.

"North, they would have to travel eight days to the next well, El Gattara. West, they'd hit the waterless dunes of El Jouf.

And to the east, they run a fine chance of bumping their noses against the Kidal detachment which is active in that region, and they well know it, too. We bar the path south. They have to stay at Bir el Malek nine hours longer. In that time—"

"Right, Captain."

"Now, we'll go ahead. You know how the land lies at the well?"

"From the sketch map, yes. Facing north, as we are facing, it is hedged on the left by a tall dune. On the right, the country is fairly open."

He took from his map case the rough map brought back by the geographical mission that had camped at Bir el Malek.

"There's little use trying to rush those fellows in the dark," Ruault went on. "Our blacks might get out of hand—run wild. We'll keep them busy until morning, and, as soon as daylight comes, drive in."

"Yes."

Orders were given to the *Tirailleurs* to fill the canteens, and to assure themselves that they had the two hundred and fifty cartridges—on themselves, not in the baggage that stayed with the camels. Fakko Diop, who could be depended upon not to lose his head in an emergency, was put in charge of the animals. The more resolute of the camp servants were armed with the carbines taken from the dead Moors. That gave Fakko an added force of five men.

Ruault led the way.

In a few minutes the *Tirailleurs* were over the back of a low ridge, and in sight of the Berabers' fires.

"The —— fools!" Lartal remarked to Ferisson. "They haven't put out their lights! They'll give us a target."

"Do they know we're near?"

"Yes. They're waiting."

"Open order," Ruault suggested. "Ferisson, slide over to the right with your group. Open fire when I blow my whistle."

"Understood, Captain."

"On the left, Lartal."

The advance continued. The men kept in touch with a brief word spoken at intervals.

Lartal looked at the fires. Perhaps the band had gone, leaving the fires to deceive the French. He was reassured almost immediately. One by one, the fires were extinguished.

Ruault whistled.

THE detonation of the Lebel rifles followed.

Then, in a gradually swelling staccato, as if a gigantic wooden stick were being dragged along an iron fence, came the answering fire. Flashes winked briefly. Bullets passed high overhead.

A clamor rising from the Moors' camp revealed that some of the *Tirailleurs'* missiles had found their mark. Lartal pitied them. They could not shift their position, they had to hold the well to obtain water for the long trip to the next water-hole. The *Tirailleurs* knew where to aim and could move about from place to place after firing. By morning the enemy's number would be lessened appreciably. Moreover, the camels also were exposed to the fusillade. And a raider without a fast camel is little better than a dead raider.

A vibrating voice rose near him—Ruault's.

"Fire slowly—remember where those fires were. Shoot low—and slow—slow—"

Ferisson's voice, repeating the words like an echo, rang out at the right. Lartal also repeated the order.

He understood Ruault's idea. If the blacks kept on firing feverishly they would soon exhaust their ammunition. By firing slowly, they would necessarily use more deliberation, and consequently prove more accurate. And scattered accurate shots throughout the night would demoralize the Moors far more than sharp volleys and then silence. Ruault spoke again, in Bambara. The men nearest Lartal laughed. The captain doubtless could show a sense of humor when it was needed to encourage his men. A great leader—with a splendid future, some one had told Lartal.

And he believed it now. He had heard the captain's voice, a moment before, ring out in the dark—metallic, sharp, commanding. And now the laughter of the blacks, in response to a few words spoken in the customary soft, warm modulations. They were pliable in his hands. They would follow him anywhere.

A groan came from one of the negroes. Lartal moved toward him, stretched out his hand until he felt the man's arm under his fingers.

"Hit?"

"Yessah."

"Bad? Hurt much?"

"No sah."

"Get to the camels. Fakko Diop will take care of thee."

"I stay. No hurt."

"All right. But get back when it starts to hurt." Then he called out to Ruault—

"Man hit."

A bullet dug in the sand, very near, then another.

"Man hit," Ferisson shouted.

The hours passed slowly. The word passed along the line from man to man. The wounded man reported by Ferisson had died.

The men slept in turn, on the sand, with the rattle of shots continuing. Lartal, himself, upon Ruault's advice, tried to take a rest. The Berabers would not counter-attack. They were eager only to fill their goat-skins and depart. At one time, galloping hoofs brought every one standing. A wounded camel, stampeded from the vicinity of the well. The beast passed through the French line and its roars receded in the distance.

Lartal placed his helmet on the ground, struck a match inside of it to glance at his watch.

"Four o'clock. An hour more."

In an hour it would be light enough to launch an attack with the bayonet. Not light enough to shoot with absolutely clear vision, but light enough for the *Tirailleurs* to see their chiefs.

Ruault called out again:

"Fire slowly—aim—low—steady. *Tirailleurs*—steady!"

"Soon we fight with bayonet," Kitosso remarked. He added, with deepest conviction, "Bayonet—it be no good for Moors!"

THE new light floated over the sandy plain like a translucent fog. Lartal could see the *Tirailleurs* ahead and to his right, dimly. Ruault came unexpectedly to his side.

"By the time we've crossed the space between us and the well, the sun will be high enough. We better start now."

"Yes, Captain."

"Attention, *Tirailleurs*—fix bayonets!"

A brief, multiplied rustle of steel, then expectant silence.

"Double-quick—march!"

Ruault hurried, to take his place in the center, and Lartal, passing between two men, took the head of his section. The light was fast increasing. A moment before, he had been unable to see twelve feet away; now, he seemed to be running in a circle of lighted soil fifty feet in diameter. The sand appeared dull, colorless, like crushed ashes. The pattering of the *Tirailleurs'* bare feet slapping on the ground quickened.

A carbine was fired, very near.

Lartal saw a *Tirailleur* lunge, throwing his body behind the weapon, as if in dummy practise. He appeared to have struck into the sand, but Lartal knew that one of the snipers sent out by the raiders during the night had been dealt with. There were more of them. They rose and tried to run as the Frenchmen's soldiers loomed upon them. Few succeeded.

The defenders of the well opened fire. A bullet pierced Lartal's helmet, another brushed against his sleeve. A private fell, another, a third. As if the last shred of the night had been sucked away by the rising sun, the plain was flooded with strong light. Lartal saw the enemy's position, protected by kneeling camels and bales of merchandise. Not a hundred and fifty yards separated him from that wall. The hand-to-hand conflict that would decide the issue of the day was only a few seconds away.

He looked for Ruault.

The captain was running, ten feet ahead of the bulk of his men, rifle in hand. Farther, Ferisson could be seen striding swiftly. And then the unexpected happened.

From the right came a terrific volley. The bullets struck the sand like hail on a tin roof. The detachment, bewildered, swirled and milled. Men fell everywhere. A tall private near Lartal spun on his heels, fell, rose again, holding his left hand against his face. A bullet had smashed his jaw. A sort of inhuman, fierce howl came from him, as he lurched on.

"Halt," called Ruault. "Lie down—lie down!"

While the *Tirailleurs* threw themselves on the sand, the captain ran to Lartal.

"What's that, Lartal?"

"We are flanked, Captain. The fire from the well doesn't seem to have dwindled. There must be others."

"Another bunch must have joined them—at least as strong in number. We've dropped fourteen men since last night—"

"What are we going to do?"

"We better not close in on the well. The others would slide along our rear. We

can withdraw temporarily and decide what to do."

He turned to the men and shouted orders. Still firing, the *Tirailleurs* fell back, toward the positions occupied during the night. There, they would find the holes they had dug for themselves in the sand, and risked less danger from bullets. The volleys from the right lashed the sand every thirty seconds.

"Forty or fifty rifles," the captain said.

"Nearer seventy. A neat trick."

"Neat—very neat. Never lose your sense of appreciation, Lartal!"

The lieutenant noticed blood on Ruault's sleeve.

"Hit?"

"Nothing. Creased over the shoulder." Ruault spoke to the nearest private, "Pass the word to Lieutenant Ferisson to come to me."

Ferisson ran toward the two white men, bending low, holding the collar of his tunic with the left hand, his shoulders high, like a man dashing out into a sleety rain. He thumped to the sand on his stomach.

"Captain?"

"You saw them—they're nearest you. How many?"

"A lot. You can see their backs like a flock of blue sheep, Captain. And there are many camels halted way in back of them. They have just arrived, I believe."

"You believe rightly," Ruault said, with dry humor. "Otherwise they'd have been on top of us during the night."

"The men are nervous," Ferisson added.

"I don't believe any of us are models of calm!"

The *Tirailleurs* had reached their holes. Kitosso and another black crawled toward the group, dragging a man between them, a Moor, wounded during the retreat. He was naked, save for the rag around his middle. A sheath knife was strapped to his forearm.

"He talk," Kitosso informed them.

"You talk Arabic, Lartal. Question him," the captain said.

"Who are those others who came in the dawn?" Lartal demanded.

"The men of Moktar el Khiani."

"How many are they?"

"Six score."

"Did thy chief know they were to come?"

"Yes." The Moor smiled, an ironical smile. "Many of them. Too many. You will not go back from where you come."

"He doesn't mind talking," Lartal pointed out, after translating the answers, "because he is sure it will not help us."

Kitosso lifted his bayonet, and drove it into the man's heart. Ferisson had risen to his knees, making an instinctive gesture of protest."

"What could we do with him?" Ruault asked. "We haven't water to spare. And he was capable of handling a carbine."

They had crawled to the shelter of a row of runted bushes struggling out of the arid sand. The hail of lead from the raiders crackled in the branches. Ruault examined the horizon through his field-glasses.

"Ever hear of Moktar el Khiani, Lartal?"

"Yes. Massacred a strong patrol west of the Adrar post. Not a fool by any means."

"He pushed us back on our heels neatly enough." He passed the field-glasses to Lartal. "Look on the right. Do you see any movement?"

"A long row of camels progressing swiftly toward the south—"

"You know where those men are going—"

"To attack our camel guards."

"Yes."

RUAULT turned to Ferisson and touched him on the shoulder. "You see that low ridge? Take ten men, with Kitosso. You can make it in ten minutes. Hold out for twenty minutes against that bunch after you reach the ridge."

"Understood, Captain," Ferisson replied, and left, followed by Kitosso.

Lartal spoke impulsively—

"Captain—I—"

"What?"

"The entire detachment could shift over in that direction, and fall back upon the camels."

"And give those immediately ahead of us a straight line for the camp, eh?"

"Those ahead of us are tired out. They won't move."

"It isn't what they will or won't do. It's what they might do."

"Why not let me go, Captain? It's not too late."

"Ferisson will do as well. No need to be sorcerer to stick to an assigned place twenty minutes."

"He's too eager and enthusiastic. He may expose himself more than is needed. He'll be killed."

"Possibly."

"He saved my life last night, and I—"

"The safety of the detachment comes before your personal gratitude."

Lartal looked at Ruault steadily. The captain did not lower his eyes.

"That's your last word?" Lartal said.

"My last word, and—" Ruault's face did not change expression—"I believe it is enough."

The *Tirailleurs* fell back, taking away their wounded comrades. The camels were two and a half miles to the rear, a long stretch under fire. But the sunlight was slanting into the eyes of the Berabers, which, added to the increasing distance, did not make for accuracy.

Far to the right, Ferisson's group raced for the ridge that lifted in the path of the enemy's left wing. He was compelled to admit that Ruault had wisely chosen the spot. Ferisson would reach it in time. And he and his men would be sufficient to halt the turning movement for a time, long enough perhaps to allow the detachment to attain the camels.

The single white figure leading the blue-clad *Tirailleurs* gained the ridge and vanished. The detonations of the Lebels warned Lartal that Ferisson's men had opened fire, that the first of the twenty minutes was passing. There was no smoke, anywhere. The raiders had modern weapons, used smokeless powder.

Yes, Ruault had sent Ferisson to his death, as certainly as if he had pressed the trigger of a gun pointed at the sub-lieutenant's head. But it was a commander's business to dispose of his men as he pleased. Lartal continued to watch the ridge. The *Tirailleurs* were standing, and Ferisson was still in command. Other figures appeared near them, and the two parties met, mingled. From a distance it was impossible to perceive which was holding the upper hand. Then, some of the figures vanished rapidly—and Ferisson's helmet reappeared.

"Bravo!" Lartal cried.

After all, Ferisson might escape alive. He seemed lucky. It was difficult to believe that he would not come back. Other men had come out of hopeless situations. Ruault was one example. He had lived.

THE detachment traveled south, fast as the camels could be urged—a silent, discouraged caravan.

Of the fifty-five blacks, sixteen were left behind, dead. Twenty-one were wounded, several so severely that they would not be able to participate actively in defense, if defense were needed.

And young Ferisson was dead.

Kitosso, and the five survivors of the group that had held the ridge against Moktar and his men, had brought his body back after the twenty minutes demanded by Ruault had passed. So fierce a defense had they presented against the overwhelming number of Berabers that they were left to retire upon the camp. Kitosso, the knuckles of the left hand smashed, a cut across his face from the corner of his eye over his flat nose and down to his chin, was half delirious, hysterical. He was bloody from head to foot. He spoke of rows and rows of Moors mowed down by adjusted fire as they climbed the slope, of more who had fallen before the bayonet, and had been dropped by Ferisson's revolver.

Ferisson had been literally hacked to pieces. Kitosso, driven back, had been unable to protect him, and those near him had in vain shielded his body with their own. Lances and swords had thrust and slashed. Then Kitosso had recovered, and pushed the Moors back again, long enough to recover the dead.

Ruault and Lartal had wrapped the corpse in blankets, lashed it within several hides. Ferisson would be buried at the nearest French post.

Ruault's intention was to reach the Sebdu Well, five days' ride to the south, there replenish the goat-skins, water the camels, and strike east toward Araouan Well, where another detachment was believed to be stationed. If there were no Frenchmen there, the chief of the native village, built close to that water point, would grant them shelter inside the thick walls of the Kasba.

Lartal knew that the defeat just inflicted upon a French detachment would echo throughout the desert. It was not often that the Berabers won out, no matter what the odds. Usually, superior discipline, and that indefinable prestige and good fortune that clings to white men in primitive lands, contributed to their defeat.

Lartal was also worried about the immediate future. Moktar was not the sort

of leader to relinquish an advantage. He must know that a victory over the French, a complete victory, would enhance his fame more than a looting tour, no matter how successful. And, while greedy, Moktar was like all others of his breed, proud.

And the arms, camels and baggage of the detachment would be no small booty. Good rifles could be sold in the Sahara easier than any other article. The government animals, while all were not fine beasts of selected stock, were better than the average. And another reason would loom large in Moktar's mind—revenge. Many times the *Tirailleurs* led by white officers had defeated the Berabers, torn from them their hard-earned loot.

Lartal knew with what speed news travels in the dunes. No more than others did he understand by what mysterious telegraphy tidings were spread from oasis to oasis.

The bands of Tripolitan warriors that at this season were camping in the Ouahila pastures far to the north would hear soon. The Tripolitans often attacked the Moroccans, but might join them now against a foe of another race, an intruder of the desert.

In two or three days, the smaller bands of raiders hovering near the Sahel would hear, become emboldened, plunder friendly tribes of their camels and flocks which had been sent north a few weeks ago, away from the Niger banks and the *m'bori* flies.

Lartal had sometimes failed to win a conclusive victory. But this was the first time he had turned his back on a determined, unbroken band.

He rode with the rear guard.

Often he turned in his saddle, expecting to see the camel men of Moktar cantering behind him. If the Berabers would delay, give the detachment a day's advance, Ruault and he would be able to whip the gloomy *Tirailleurs* into a fighting aggregation once more.

Even against the reinforcements brought by Moktar, a resolute attack at the Malek Well might have won out. Instead of halting the rush, a more daring leader would have pushed the bayonet charge home, cleared the vicinity of the waterhole, and then devoted his attention to the newcomer. There was a streak of caution in Ruault, which belied his reputation. The majority of the officers Lartal had served with would have carried the fight forward in spite of changed conditions.

Ruault had drawn aside to allow the detachment to pass by, and was waiting for him.

"No sign of pursuit so far," he began.

"Fortunately," Lartal agreed.

"I think that we can be at ease on that score, Lartal. They would have shown up before now."

"You forget, Captain, that Moktar had just arrived, and needed water. He will be after us as soon as his skins are filled."

Lartal went on, stating his reasons for believing that the Berabers would follow.

The captain admitted the logical supposition readily.

"We had best make the most of our lead, then."

"We had— And let us thank Allah that Moktar did not think of the obvious method by which he could pursue us and give us no rest."

"What's that?"

"His camels were worn out by a long trip, needed water. But his men were comparatively fresh. The Moors at the well were worn out by a night's fighting, but their animals were fresh. With the prize beasts, there were enough camels to mount at least fifty riders." Lartal grinned. "Fifty snipers on our flanks just now would annoy us exceedingly."

Ruault was thoughtful for a while.

"You know your business, Lartal," he commented. "Yes, you served an apprenticeship."

He rode away to resume the lead.

"If I hadn't been told marvels of that man," Lartal thought, "I'd believe he was scared! In fact I do believe it—"

Fakko Diop hovered near. Several times he had been about to speak, then had hesitated.

"What dost thou want?" Lartal invited impatiently.

"I want nothing," Diop replied placidly. "I say that it is not good to go back. We could have gone on."

"How dost thou know so much? Thou wert with the camels," Lartal said sharply.

He, a white man and a lieutenant, made his comments mentally. But the black sergeant spoke his mind.

"I talked with the *Tirailleurs* who were there. The well was very near. Why stop?"

"For reasons a black does not understand, Diop, dost thou hear."

"Yes, Lieutenant, I hear. It was said

to me to speak. I spoke." Diop, not in the least abashed, went on, "And—after the *Tirailleurs* had the well, I would have come with the camels. Moktar was outside, without water. He could not have stayed there forever—"

"Shut up," Lartal suggested.

"Yes, Lieutenant."

Diop, without training in the intricacies of warfare, had isolated the salient feature of the combat—the well. They who held the well were masters. And the *Tirailleurs* had been within a few leaps of the waterhole. Had Ruault kept his head, he would have realized that fact and pushed on. Lartal had tried to speak at the time, but Ruault had drowned him with a succession of sharp orders. Orders. It was his right to give orders.

It might be said that if the *Tirailleurs could* storm the well, the enemy could have done the same. Save for the important fact that the soldiers had bayonets, which gave them a clear edge in hand-to-hand fighting. And no position is carried by rifle fire.

Diop evidently felt no grudge against Lartal for the sharp invitation to be silent.

THE early part of the evening was devoted to the wounded. A tent was erected in the center of the square, and Ruault, assisted by Lartal, examined the wounds, dressing them as well as their limited skill permitted. Then Lartal attended to the captain's wound, nothing more than a deep scratch.

They were left alone in the tent; the last wounded man had been carried out.

"Good night," said Lartal.

Ruault detained him with a gesture.

"What's the matter with you, Lartal?"

"With me? I believe that there's enough the matter with all of us."

"You feel badly about Ferisson? So do I—"

Lartal made a vague gesture. He did not wish to talk now, he was tired, nervous. This was not the time for a discussion, his last shred of caution warned him.

"You believe that his death could have been avoided?" Ruault insisted.

"Say no more about it, Captain. Ferisson is dead, and nothing will mend that." Lartal smiled grimly. "Sincerely, I envy him. A debâcle such as this is not made to cheer a man up."

"You seem unduly excited, Lartal—"

"I do?"

"Yes. What's wrong?"

"To tell you the truth, I've been thinking about Tranchet."

"Tranchet—"

"Wondering—if he was sacrificed as usefully as Ferisson."

"Tranchet was a rather moody, excitable man, like yourself, Lartal."

"Many people thought us much alike."

"Exactly what do you mean?" Ruault stood up now, facing his lieutenant.

He was in his undershirt, having discarded his tunic to allow Lartal to bandage his shoulder.

"In your report, filed at Timbuktu, you stated above your signature that Maurice Tranchet was killed in action."

"That was my report—"

"I am beginning to think—" Lartal clenched his hands. "Did Tranchet, by any chance, go off on the same sort of mission that Ferisson undertook this morning? I know perfectly well that you believed it necessary—this morning. But Tranchet? It would have been easy for you to think a dangerous stunt necessary—with him. One of you was to go back, the other was to stay. Hardly fair when one was to command, the other to carry out orders."

"So you know—all that?"

"Tranchet wrote me. One was to come back— And you're ruthless. You were ruthless this morning with Ferisson. I sicken with shame now to think of that boy cut to bits—to save us. What was the reason you suddenly believed your skin so precious? As far as I'm concerned, I'd sooner have dropped up there, near that —— well, than be running before a parcel of bandits. The reason? You're a married man now—"

Ruault's face did not change expression, but he moved forward swiftly, and his fist caught Lartal on the lips. It was not a slap, but a well-delivered, solid punch.

Lartal shook his head and wiped his bleeding lips. It did not occur to him to return the blow.

"You know my opinion," he said. "In the meanwhile, as long as we last, we better not change our ways. The *Tirailleurs* would be prompt to notice, and they are perturbed enough as it is."

"You've talked to me as no one ever talked," Ruault said. "I hope you'll give me satisfaction."

Lartal laughed—

"You can help yourself, Ruault, the next time there's a dirty job to be done. You're commanding officer, you know."

WHETHER he had come to the realization that his handling of the situation had not been for the best, or because of the stormy interview with Lartal, Ruault became gloomy. He rode through the long days, listless, his face without expression, following the detachment like a somnambulist, leaving Lartal to command.

The blacks, sensitive in the extreme, had soon noted that the captain was discouraged, and looked to the other European for their salvation.

There was just enough water left for drinking purposes. The wounded called for extra drink that could not be given to them. The bullet-holes and cuts from swords, unwashed and swathed in coarse, dry bandages, festered. As long as they could cling to consciousness, the negroes would not even groan. But when delirium freed them from restraint, they howled in suffering, in dismay, in fear.

The slash on Kitosso's face, from which the bandage slipped constantly, filled with fine sand, suppurated. But he refused to be strapped on a camel with the sick convoy. He was in charge of the camel which bore Ferisson's body, and he kept his attention on the shapeless leather bundle, thrown like a sack across a pack camel.

"Araouan—Araouan!" he kept repeating. At Araouan, Ferisson would be buried, Lartal had promised him.

Shortly before night of the sixth day the detachment reached the Sebdu Well. It was a deep hole in the ground, and men had to be lowered to water-level, dangling at the end of leather straps fastened together. In compensation, the water proved to be clear, almost cold, far superior to the muddy liquid found in holes nearer the surface.

Ruault shook off his apathy. He helped Lartal with the wounded men.

They washed the wounds in lukewarm water, daubed the torn flesh with iodine. Gangrene threatened in several cases. Neither the captain nor Lartal dared attempt the necessary operations. One gigantic Bambara had been struck in the knee. The articulation was smashed. Another man suffered a fracture of the hip bone. A third had both ankles broken. Two were as good as dead, their abdomens pierced.

The hand-book that Lartal found in Ruault's baggage was of little help: It suggested that the wounded man be put to bed, kept motionless, and that a competent physician be sent for. So that Lartal broke more iodine bulbs, and talked cheerfully. That was about all that could be done.

"Most of those men will die," Ruault said gloomily.

"No. Their vitality is tremendous. But they're sadly in need of a good surgeon."

An hour after sunset, the cook, calm and attentive as ever, informed the officers that dinner was ready. Rice and corned beef, washed down with strong coffee and a half cupful of wine. The captain left when he had finished and lay down on his blankets. Again Lartal saw his sleeve rise and drop monotonously, and the thin smoke rise, curl and vanish. There was much left unsaid between the two.

The splash of canvas buckets into the water, the dribbling, gurgling sound as the skins filled. The wounded were quieter tonight than on other nights. The wet bandages and full canteens soothed them. Kitosso, in spite of Lartal's warnings, kept winding and unwinding the bands wrapping his hand, to glance at his mangled fingers. His greatest fear was of amputation, for if this occurred he could be a soldier no longer.

The coffee-pot, three feet away from Lartal, resounded, leaped a few inches to one side.

Before the crack of the carbine, floating from afar in the dunes, reached his ears, the lieutenant was throwing sand on the coals. Diop shouted, and the blanketed forms around the other fires rose and moved swiftly. Then all was dark.

A second bullet followed the first, a third, a fourth, with a whirring smash against the sand. One of the wounded men called out that he had been hit again. Lartal passed from man to man, cautioning them not to shoot, save at the flashes. He was grimly amused at the reversal of fate. A few days before, they had been firing at the Berabers, who were around a well.

His chief concern now was for the camels. The raiders had enough stolen animals not to feel the loss of a few. But the

detachment was not so well provided. It had started north with a total of seventy-three camels and had already lost eight from disease and fatigue. If many more were killed tonight, they would be forced to abandon part of the baggage to accommodate the wounded men.

The fusillade from the open increased. Probably Moktar's entire force was in action.

Ruault had taken a rifle, and, resting it across a saddle, watched the night, pressing the trigger only when fairly certain of a target. He must be aware that fire from the French square would have no effect upon the situation as a whole. But he could not demand of his men that they remain passive under fire. Nothing is more demoralizing to the blacks.

At ten o'clock the situation was unchanged.

The Moors kept a safe distance, and their fire had lost much of its accuracy. There was no attempt to surround the well to cut off escape. Moktar's men were evidently in need of water. They would be satisfied, for tonight, to drive the French from the water-hole, and later pursue and attack them.

THE captain joined Lartal.

"I have an idea. Suppose those fellows couldn't get water here. Would they try the eight-day jaunt to Araouan?"

"Not likely."

"If the well was closed to them, we could start out and know they wouldn't be on our heels."

"You mean filled? It would be easy enough. There's plenty of sand around here. But what of the other caravans, the very men we are sent out to protect? They would come here, confident that they could find water. What would happen to them?"

"I didn't say fill the well," Ruault declared. "I meant—suppose the well was kept from them by force."

"There's something in that idea, Captain. But what of the men who stay to hold it?"

"Lost, of course."

"Not a chance for them. And to make the sacrifice worth while we could not leave many behind."

"My reasoning is this," Ruault stated. "We have thirty-nine *Tirailleurs* left. Of those thirty-nine, twenty-three are wounded—two were hit tonight, leaving sixteen sound men. Out of the twenty-three wounded there are eight or nine who might not stand the camel journey. But here, with plenty of water, and a little food, they could hold on against the Berabers for two, three, even four days. Eight Lebels, properly handled, can stop quite a few men. The rest could go on, and gain Araouan, with camels and baggage."

"I think the idea monstrous!" Lartal declared. "Leaving wounded men behind—"

"Yet, can you suggest a better one? Now, I think if the camels are led carefully, the detachment can leave quietly during the night. By morning it should be far enough away to be out of immediate reach. And it will take a while for the others to notice the trick. Believe me, I would like to see another way out. But there isn't. And I am in command."

"Yes—"

"Of course I would not leave them without a white officer."

And then he left, and Lartal saw him giving orders to Fakko Diop.

The lieutenant shook with laughter. So he was to be left behind. But Fakko Diop spoke French, did not lack intelligence, and would be able to supply the court martial with full details as to the incidents of this trip. He thought of writing farewell letters and entrusting them to Diop. But he disliked the sensational. And—he might pull through, in which event he would feel ridiculous.

The Sudanese service had not proved lucky for Tranchet or for himself.

He collected his scanty belongings: notebook, silver match-safe, a pocket compass, his watch—Tranchet's watch. The first three would go to his own family. He inclosed them in an envelope already addressed. The watch—it would go back to Tranchet's mother. Should he write her the truth—about Ruault? No. His hands were tied. The future was uncertain. There was always hope.

He must address the parcels, place them in Ruault's care. Should he entrust them to Fakko Diop or another of the blacks, it would not fail to arouse suspicion, for other white men would seek the reason for the patent lack of courtesy between the two officers. Lartal sought the captain. He

had heard him last, conversing with the wounded, probably selecting the group that would stay behind.

Kitosso directed him. Ruault had gone back to his shelter, a piece of canvas stretched from the back of a camel to the ground. Lartal lifted a corner, and saw his chief, squatted with his back against the flank of the animal, scribbling on his knee in the weak light of a lantern.

"The light can't be seen," Ruault explained, as if in apology.

"No," Lartal agreed.

Ruault's face was dripping. Lartal slid in under beside him, the envelopes in his hand.

"Just a moment," Ruault said, and added a few lines to the letter he had been writing, folded the paper, placed it in an envelope, addressed it with a nervous scrawl of the pencil.

"For my wife," he explained. "Send it from Timbuktu, or give it to her yourself when you pass—" he broke off, and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

Bewildered, Lartal took the envelope, placed it in his coat pocket. Ruault blew out the lantern.

"Let's get some air," he said, removing the canvas. Then he went on, "About Ferisson. The detachment could spare him better than either of us. Now, the time has come to drop some one else overboard. If I did not sincerely think that you are more able to extricate our men, I would not allow your opinion to sway me. But twice you've been proved right: When you said that the men at the well would not close in, that they were tired, and again when you said that Moktar would follow us. You know more about the desert— And so I'm staying—"

He pressed a paper into the lieutenant's hand.

"A written order— And don't feel badly about the men. I asked who would remain with me—and I could have had my pick of the whole bunch. You see, they know me, or, more correctly, they knew me. I don't know what has come over me lately, but something was wrong, the quick decision, the handling of men in an emergency. For a while I thought my courage had gone with the rest—"

Sergeant Diop came to report that the skins were filled, and the camels watered. Ruault had evidently given his orders.

And the last orders he now gave in his cool crisp voice. There was some confusion. Camels are stubborn animals, and dislike the unusual. And it was unusual to travel at night, unless the moon was brilliant. At length the last pack was strapped securely. The sniping of the Moors kept up, and Ruault's men, those who were to stay behind, fired rapidly to cover the din.

"Good luck," said Ruault.

He laid his hand on Lartal's knee. Instinctively the lieutenant reached down from the saddle to grasp it. But his beast was already moving, led by one of the *Tirailleurs*.

IT WAS now almost full daylight. Lartal halted the detachment, to hush for a moment the shuffling and constant clamor. He had not been mistaken. The rifle-firing, which had gradually receded as the miles unwound, came faintly, but clearly to his ears, in a renewed fervent crescendo.

The *Tirailleurs*, too, listened, their brutish, scarred faces tense and drawn. They knew what was happening. Over there, at the well, their comrades were fighting their last combat. And Lartal, who was learning to read those faces, at first all alike in their dumb ferocity, saw reflected in the wide black pupils swimming in the pinkish whites, emotions very similar to his own—anguish and dim shame.

The blacks could not understand why one white leader was taking them away from the fighting. They were manifestly uneasy, plainly puzzled. Perhaps they had not quite understood what Ruault was doing.

Ruault had selected men wounded in the legs, men who could sit still and fire a rifle comfortably, and await the certain end like warriors, with the elegance beloved of all fighting breeds— But wounded men, still.

The lieutenant questioned himself. What was he doing here? He had written orders, but was a slip of paper sufficient to satisfy his conscience? Other men had received such orders, in similar circumstances. But they had not obeyed. Not in Africa. Over and above the authority given superiors by the Government loomed the tradition of the service. The dangers of one should be the dangers of all—in the desert. Fate alone decided who stayed and who came back.

When he had believed himself the man to be left behind he had thought the plan inhuman. The fact that he was the one to go did not alter matters. Wounded men must be protected, given first opportunity to escape. And an officer did not leave another.

Ruault's argument, based on economy of men, was insane. It did not hold together upon inspection. Ruault must be mad.

Desert madness— Lartal had heard the term often enough. He, himself, on moonlight nights in the dunes, had felt something akin to insanity creeping into his brain. Desert delusions, that made illogical arguments as real to the brain as the mirage of palms and limpid waters were to the eyes. False standards seemed true. A brave man was turned into a coward—and at times, a coward into a hero.

Had he, Lartal, been completely sane, in the last few days? Had he been doing his duty to the detachment, quarreling with Ruault, striving to discover something that was in the past, when all his thoughts, all his strength should have been devoted to the task ahead? Had he been fairer to the blacks than Ruault had been?

While Lartal had been thinking, the blacks had gathered, and were looking up at him. They saw that he was irresolute, knew that he was half swayed.

Kitosso brandished his rifle high in the air.

"Fighting be good—" he shouted. "Only fighting be good."

He could not mistake the question asked of him, nor the hope that was lifting in them. The progress from the well had been slow, in the darkness. In an hour's fast riding, the detachment could be back—where it should be. The *Tirailleurs* watched his lips with annoying fixity.

"We go back," he announced.

And he laughed as they scrambled into the saddles.

"We savvy. Fight—fight—"

The detachment moved north again, at a dizzy speed. The ridges that concealed the well were crossed one after the other. Lartal recalled the cautious, plodding advance during the night, over these same rises of sand. He had been making for a haven of safety then, but he had not felt as exhilarated as now.

"Fakko Diop—take the wounded back to the well. Tell the sound men to come with me—"

He swung toward the right. Why be conservative? Why face Ruault, whose orders he was disobeying?

"Dismount!"

The *Tirailleurs* slid to the sand, formed in line, sixteen of them. One was the detachment's bugler.

"Bayonets!" He turned to the bugler and gave the order, "Charge!"

The brassy notes strung out in the stillness.

He led the way, up the first slope, and down the opposite flank. In the depression, no one was to be seen. Yet, Lartal was certain that a group of the raiders had been stationed there during the night. The line swept swiftly up the next slope.

Beyond the slope, in the second depression of sand, two Moors, but both dead. One in white, the other in dark blue, bandoliers in which cartridges glistened slung around their torsoes. Lartal tried to comprehend this mysterious disappearance of fighting men. The enemy had been here a few minutes before, and had fled.

"There!" panted Lartal.

Scurrying warriors crested a far dune. The *Tirailleurs* fired a few shots. Lartal widened his eye, seeking the horde that was to engulf them.

He was weary. His legs were giving way beneath his weight. His heart was thumping, and breathing was a torture. He was compelled to halt.

The firing had ceased, completely. This made the air strangely empty. They found more dead men. In spots, the sand glittered with empty cartridges. They gained the top of the next ridge, swept the low swelling dunes. Far to the north, traveling rapidly, the last of Moktar's men were disappearing.

"SO MOKTAR EL KHIANI and his men left suddenly, without particular reason?" Major Delaurier asked of Ruault.

The detachment had met, at Araouan, a strong contingent of troops sent north as soon as rumors of disaster had reached Timbuktu. Delaurier, major of Spahis, a veteran colonial leader, was in command.

The captain, who had omitted details of the night at Sebdu well, was visibly embarrassed. Delaurier spoke casually, but

there was a hint of wonder in his tone. He knew Moktar of old. Lartal believed that it was time to speak. He could not absolutely fathom Ruault's motive. But it was better to tell the truth.

"Major, Captain Ruault, through modesty no doubt, has not informed you that he stayed behind, giving me orders to proceed with the bulk of the detachment. I disobeyed those orders." He explained quickly, and concluded—

"When I attacked the Berabers, they no doubt believed themselves flanked by another detachment."

Delaurier glanced at the captain.

"Yes, I stayed behind. I was doing my best to mend what had happened by my fault, Major," Ruault said boldly. "I had lacked resolution. And the death of sub-lieutenant Ferisson weighed heavily on my mind."

The major rubbed his big nose with the back of a hairy hand, thoughtfully.

"No man is invariably correct in his diagnosis of a situation. I would not worry longer, were I you, Captain Ruault. Lartal, you took a chance that worked out for the best. There is nothing more to be said. Moktar will be down again. If not this season, next. You will have the opportunity to meet him, Lartal. As for Captain Ruault, he is leaving."

Lartal turned swiftly to Ruault.

"Are you going on leave, Captain?"

"I'm quitting the service," Ruault replied.

"Oh—" Delaurier put in lightly. "It was an open secret before you left Timbuktu, Lartal. Didn't you know?"

The captain smiled faintly, and handed the major a list of names. Then, with a brief word of apology, he walked away, toward the tents where the wounded men had been placed.

"Captain Ruault placed two or three lines under your name that will have influence on your promotion," the major said. "He has asked permission to go back to Timbuktu with the men who are taking down the report. They leave in an hour. If you wish to thank him—"

"Yes, Major—"

He found Ruault and spoke the usual banal words of thanks.

"Many things have occurred in the last few days that have shown me that I behaved like an ass on one occasion, Captain," he said. "But at the risk of offending you once more, I must inform you that Madame Tranchet received letters from Maurice before he left on that last trip. Unless her mind is set at rest, I don't know what she will do—"

"Will I never hear the last of this affair," Ruault wondered disgustedly. "With all due respect to the dead, Tranchet was a fool to write so much."

"Possibly," Lartal admitted. "He was not himself then."

"I have hesitated to tell you the truth, partly to spare your memory of your friend, and for a more selfish reason.

"My wife is concerned. I can set you at ease now that I am compelled to. On the very morning of our departure from Timbuktu, after Tranchet had mailed his letter to Madame Tranchet, we received a note from Mademoiselle Delmas. Tranchet was gently informed of her decision. Both notes are in existence. I can send them to you later."

"You have the note written to Tranchet?"

"Yes, I took possession of it—after—what happened. The choice having been made by Mademoiselle Delmas, Tranchet shook hands with me. He was gloomy for awhile. Suddenly he apparently recovered his spirits, and showed the most touching affection for me. I believed that we would become firm friends. Then Tranchet began to talk of my fiancée. Her likes and dislikes. Her taste in dress. He talked of her constantly. I was very patient. He had a pile of letters received before my wife met me, that he had brought out with him. He presented them to me, saying he had no longer the right to keep them. Naturally, this was torture for me."

"I understand," Lartal granted.

"The night before the attack, he was more fluent than ever. He gave me a letter to deliver to Yvonne. When I suggested that he mail it upon his return, he informed me, that his life being empty now, he would not return. What could I do? He was the first man in the Berabers' square the next morning, fighting like a fiend. He was untouched at the end. Still smiling, he placed the muzzle of a revolver in his mouth and pressed the trigger."

"Suicide—" Lartal breathed.

"Yes. I took the body back to Timbuktu. The doctors saw the powder-blackened bullet wound. I conferred with

several officers, one of them Major Delaurier. We agreed that the official version would not mention suicide, but would state that Tranchet had been killed in action. To spare his mother an unnecessary heartbreak, and also to save my wife and myself unpleasant gossip. As a favor to me will you please ask Major Delaurier for confirmation? I am leaving the service to enter business in France, and would like all settled behind me."

Lartal saluted.

"As you desire, Captain."

Major Delaurier declared that he had in fact been present at the conference.

"It would be unkind to change the fable now," he added. "Write Madame Tranchet that you spoke to a native trooper who had seen her son fall, killed by a Beraber bullet. What would be the use of poisoning her last years?" He broke off and looked closely at Lartal. "You seem quite shaken up, Lartal."

"I had an ideal of Tranchet that has been shattered. It hurts me."

"He was but a man. No better, no worse than we would have been—if demented. That is what ailed both of them, Lartal. That brown-eyed young animal that caused all the trouble made monkeys out of both. Probably amused herself playing one against the other. You know what she made of Tranchet. And you see what she's making of Ruault—a civilian.

"He wanted to come back to her. That's why he lacked resolution—up there. He already knew that he would leave the service, and thought his skin too precious to be risked. That flash of courage at Sebdu was the last spark of the real man, the Ruault who was an officer."

The major hesitated, then blurted out:

"Who can know how far Ruault slid? Now—you were with him up there. Ferisson was sent off. What inspired Ruault, can you be sure? Duty, a desire to save the detachment, or a blue funk that he would not come back to her? I should not talk that way, for Ruault was—is—my friend. But it's too bad, too —— bad!"

Later, Lartal joined the group of officers gathered to bid the captain good-by. He saw the negroes who had been able to rise off their cots coming forward for a last look, a last word. Was anything worth giving up the warm friendship of the first, the disinterested, whole-souled loyalty of the others?

The lieutenant felt a brusk surge of happiness that he was free, that he would stay —to meet Moktar again, while Ruault went down the line, toward life.

RUAULT was in the saddle, in the center of the red-and-white cloaks of the camel-men. He was smiling, but Lartal thought that he had lost color, that his eyes were softening. Perhaps, at the moment of departure, all that he was losing was in his mind. Yet it may have been merely an illusion.

"Good luck, Lartal," the captain singled his lieutenant from the group for the last word.

"Good luck, Captain."

Then the little caravan left. The gap of sand widened swiftly, until the red cloaks blurred and were lost in the light.

THE KILLER

by

EL COMANCHO

LIKELY you've heard of this Jean Antoine Alexis Dufrain before. They say he came from somewhere down Peace River way, then crossed over to the upper end of Hudson Bay and worked back west through the White Eskimo country to the mouth of the Mackenzie.

From the talk he must have been an Assiniboine French breed, or maybe a Cree. He stood six feet four and he hadn't an ounce of fat.

They called him the crazy Frenchman and said he brought a blizzard with him whenever he came.

You would know then, if you knew the North, that he wasn't so popular that everybody bid for his company, though he did know the white wastes better than any man, and he came and went as he pleased, weather or no weather; you can put it down that it took a two-fisted man to pull that stuff, and get away with it, and he could stand more than a polar bear—go farther on less, too.

Up there he was called Dufray—Tony Dufray, and listed as a he-wolf to travel with because he could run even his own dog team off their feet.

He didn't know how to get tired and nobody knew where he slept, for nobody ever found him asleep at any time or place.

Karluk, from the White Eskimo country, hated him and said he was a worker of magic who could cast spells, and that he had the evil eye. Karluk may have had good reasons, too, for Tony had been asked to—and needed to—explain a lot of queer things if he was to get a clean bill out of the North.

For all the poison talk about him, everybody, native and white, had to admit one thing—he could sing. Man, he could sing—and he did. It was the way you knew he was abroad; he sang the loudest when the storms were hardest, when it was guess-and-catch-can whether a man would ever come back if he went out.

And he had a small sleigh-bell fastened on each dog harness so they made a queer kind of a whistling jingle to accompany his song as he ran.

When storms raged was the time Tony picked to travel, and let me tell you it was wild stuff to hear that fellow outsing a blizzard!

I can't tell you about it; words didn't mean anything when Tony ran singing through the storm behind a string of belled wolves that said never a thing and outran the wind trying to keep ahead of the wild Frenchman's walrus-hide whip. It made a shiver creep in between your shoulder-blades—I can tell you that—just to listen to him.

And he had a way with all kinds of animals, but especially with dogs.

Let me tell you about his dogs. They were only one-eighth off of pure wolf, descended through a wolf mother and a Great Dane sire.

Man, but that was a team! If a driver could stand on his feet and throw the whip into them, he could drive them; but if he ever went down once—for ten seconds—stumbled, say, and lost his feet—they'd eat him up in two crunches apiece. And each one was a picked dog, in harness for his size and strength, and held there by the fear of a walrus whip that cut like thin steel when Tony threw it—aye! A war on all the time between them, with every wolf in the team green-eyed with desire to kill and every tooth sharped against the day to come when Tony'd slip, or go snow-blind, or forget to tie them right when he went to sleep.

That wild Frenchman had gambled every hour with death in half a dozen forms, and he had won—so far.

Then he fell in love with happy Mary McLeod, whose old daddy ran a post of his own away up on one of the top waters of the Mackenzie.

Her mother was a silent woman. Some said she was a quarter Blackfoot—tall, colored like bronze and built like a willow moving in a summer wind.

I don't know how true any of this Indian talk might have been, for I saw her only once, walking up to McLeod's post from the river and swaying like a reed to the thrust of a breeze.

Little Mary was with her, six years old at the time, ten years back.

When Tony saw her first she was fourteen, motherless, and the only girl inside of a nine-hundred-mile circle and prettier than any woman has any business to be—for her own good—up there. Her mother had been dead three years and Mary seemed to have just stepped into her mother's shadow; they were that much alike in looks.

Tony had a new puppy, a fat, roly-poly little devil of a near-wolf sired by a full-blood north country wolf with a black cross on his shoulders and the granite-green eyes of a fiend prisoned somewhere inside of him. The mother was Tony's own lead dog—eight parts wolf herself—and a leader who'd work her heart out to run on a tight trace and pick the road right to the gates o' heaven if the driver urged—and Tony never yet admitted that any sled-dog could run him down.

So that's what was in this fat puppy that Tony had already begun to work on for lead dog to take his mother's place when he got his growth.

When Tony got an eyeful of Mary McLeod that first time he made a vow—to whatever god he put faith in—to some day possess her for his own woman.

The first snow of the winter had whitened the world and the Frenchman had whirled up to McLeod's post for enough supplies to take him over on the Yukon, and, as I told you, he had this wolf-pup with him, packing him like a china doll on his sled in a fur nest.

You see, the pup was fat and roly-poly and Tony had just gotten him away from his mother's milk and was already teaching him to eat fish and meat, and the little devil took to it like a favorite son.

When Tony got to McLeod's he brought the pup in and Mary McLeod saw it.

You know how women are that way about cats and dogs—especially dogs—when they are little and helpless. It's the mother instinct in 'em I guess; they all want to pet young animals—you know that.

Well, Mary wanted the pup. Tony undoubtedly would have given her his right eye if she had asked for it, though she was, as I told you, only fourteen. But she'd lived outdoors all her life and her mother and father were both big people; old Angus, her dad, standing seventy-nine and one-half inches in his mocccasins; the mark of him is still there on the inside of his old post where he stood against the door while Kyrtle McDowell, of the Mounted, leveled his hunting-knife across the top of Angus' head and sunk the point into the hewn slab—seventy-nine and one-half inches above the floor by the steel tape.

Now, I'm no hand with women, and besides I was gone three years—went north the same day the crazy Frenchman gave the pup to Mary McLeod and told her that some day he was going to marry her.

You see Mary was full grown then—she was as tall as her mother had been, but she had the child-look about her—like a slim sapling that you know will fill out after a while and make a magnificent tree.

Tony simply went crazy over her and told her all the flattering things that French tongue of his could put into words. But Mary was not listening. She was as crazy over the wolf-pup as the Frenchman was

over her and Tony was just a dog-sled voyager in her eyes—same as all the rest of the trap and sled outfits who came and went.

Tony talked that day to McLeod about Mary, too—talked with his hands and feet, like all of his kind, and wound up saying he was coming back to marry her some day.

McLeod smoked his pipe and told the wild Frenchman Mary would choose the man she would marry when the time came.

So Jean Antoine Alexis Dufrain hooked up his team and slipped west below the horizon on his way to the Yukon the same day I went north, and I forgot about him and the wild songs that he sang when he ran his team with the blizzards.

It was nearly three years before I saw him again and I'll never forget that sight so long as I'm alive.

YOU see, the Frenchman never forgot; too much Indian in him for that. And his songs were all about Mary after that day he mushed out for the Yukon.

He was not a fool and he'd been in the North a long time. He had found a place where there was some gold on the upper Yukon, so he investigated it on this trip I tell you about and he found it again—plenty of it. This was in the early spring after I saw him at McLeod's, and he put in all summer mining there with two Indians from away off south and made a big clean-up before any one else heard of gold on the upper Yukon.

The Mounted found out afterward that the Frenchman had turned the water out and taken his stuff right from bedrock in the creek and had then turned the water back in the regular course again after he was through, so it was only by accident that any one ever knew where his gold came from.

After he got everything fixed to suit him at his diggings he'd turned the water back and then pulled out south with the two Indians.

A hundred miles away he deliberately killed both these men and buried them in the tundra.

The Northwest Mounted got this part of it a long time afterward, when some hunter reported finding two bodies dug up by wild animals at the head of a little creek called the Tahlinqua that runs into the upper Yukon.

The way they worked it out was through a knife they found that had belonged to Tony and some beadwork on a tobacco pouch that turned out to be Piegan stuff from away down on the head of the Saskatchewan. But all this is another story.

Tony came by a roundabout trail to McLeod's post from his diggings, after he'd killed these two men, and he brought his clean-up with him in caribou rawhide bags, enough coarse gold—pretty near—to buy the Bank of England, you'd think to look at it; all his dog-team could drag!

He gave the whole business to Mary McLeod along with a bale of blue fox skins worth a fortune in themselves; and he asked Mary to marry him.

Mary was just between sixteen and seventeen then and the prettiest thing that ever put a curse over the North. If the Frenchman was not already crazy, he went crazy when Mary told him no.

Tony, when he found she had picked young Kyrtle McDowell of the Mounted and was wearing his ring, said never a word but hooked up his dog-team and left with them in the first flurry of the wildest storm of that season, and they say, who heard him go, that his song that day was wilder than the call of the Canoe Men who bring death to the hearer as they paddle across the sky; you know that story, don't you?

Anyway, the crazy Frenchman went into the storm, leaving a whale of a fortune in raw gold and blue fox skins at the feet of Mary McLeod, with never a look back and the devil's own song blew down the gale behind him as he went.

And the wolf-dog belonging to Mary went with him.

This was the dog which had grown from the pup that Tony had given Mary when he first saw her and now, when he came back, the pup was going on three years and full-grown.

Everybody in the North knew—or knew about—this wolf-dog of Mary McLeod's. There was mighty little dog about him and he was the most magnificent specimen of northern wolf that any man ever looked at.

Just seven feet he measured from the tip of nose to tip of tail stretched on his side on the cabin floor—alive. Mind you, it's a big wolf *skin* that measures six-six stretched flat. You know that!

And this fellow! Man! Mary had named him "Lemolo," which you know is from the Chinook, and means "wild." Sometimes she

called him "Lemolo Kowmux"—Wild-Dog. He knew both names.

He had a black cross squarely across his shoulders and he stood half hip-high on a tall man, with eyes that were a green-granite color and steady as a mountain.

He was the only animal I ever saw that would stand and stare a man down. And I've seen many a breed and northern Indian shiver and cross himself and turn away with a prayer when he looked into that wolf's eyes. He made you shiver and feel like a lump of ice just to look at him. With Mary he was different—but she was the only one.

Wherever Mary McLeod went that wolf was at her heels—not like a dog, mind you—but like a friend, and he'd look up into her face like he wanted to talk to her.

He never made a sound, only a rumbling, quiet kind of a little growl sometimes. When he did that, whatever was going on stopped dead, for it gave notice of what he wanted done—and it was done that way. No words, no noise, just a rumble from down in his big chest and throat and you understood just what he wanted.

He was with Mary constantly, always within one leap of her side, and when she spoke to him he understood her just as well as you could have done.

At night, or whenever she went into her own room, he'd lie down across the door and he never would allow the door to be latched so he couldn't open it. Time and again he'd turn his head and stick the end of his nose through between the casing and the door and then shut his eyes and sleep, or pretend to, I don't know which, for nobody could make a move in his range of vision from his place across the doorway without the wolf's seeing it.

It was a creepy feeling just to look toward the door and find yourself staring into the icy eyes of that wolf-dog, let me tell you!

Now you can see what it meant to everybody to find Mary McLeod's wolf gone after Tony went away.

It was a fact, no getting around it though, for the wolf was about the place as usual when the Frenchman came roaring in—and gone after he left.

Several of us had noticed the wolf when Tony first came; he'd gone up-wind to the sled and straight on to its driver and Tony had recognized him as the pup he had given Mary McLeod.

There was no doubt that the wolf knew the Frenchman too, for he nuzzled him all over with his nose—you know a wolf, and a dog too, remembers with his nose—as if he had found a scent that puzzled him, and yet one which he knew.

We figured it out that he remembered the Frenchman but couldn't place him, and that would be natural enough, too, because the wolf was a pup just weaned when Tony gave him to Mary, and, of course, you'd expect him to forget all about the Frenchman when he didn't see him during all the time he was growing up.

All the same, the big wolf did remember Tony, but only from the puppy point of view, I think, and that of course was like you'd remember things that happened when you were a year old.

At any rate, the fact remains that the wolf did remember Tony enough to go prowling around with him outside of the post buildings, and that gave the crazy Frenchman his chance.

The wolf would not follow the team, but he would prowl about in really friendly fashion with Tony, whose own dogs were tied up behind one of the log buildings, out of the way of everybody, and away from the wolf-pup too.

Back here, out of sight, Tony had managed to quietly slip a walrus harness thong around the big wolf's muzzle, bring it up between his legs, over his back and down again, taking a half-hitch around the wolf's fore leg and hauling tight before he knew it. This closed the wolf's jaw so he couldn't bite and the half-hitch around his leg gave the crazy Frenchman the power to throw him and get a second hitch on his other leg.

The rest was easy because the big musher was heavy enough to hold his catch once he was down, while he looped his hind legs and thus he soon had the big wolf hog-tied and helpless. Next Tony picked up his trussed-up victim bodily and shoved him inside of a sleeping-bag, then bundled him on to the sled and lashed him down, after arranging the bag so that the wolf could breathe. Next he hooked up his team and drove out into the storm and was gone—wolf and all.

After that night nobody saw or heard of the Frenchman—or the wolf either—for over a year.

He just vanished and left no trace, for the storm had blown his tracks away nearly as fast as he made them.

WE NEVER found out how long it took, but the crazy fool never stopped to eat or do more than a bit of sleeping while his tired team rested, until somewhere on the upper Peace River he reached a little group of cabins that he seemed to know about.

Here he killed a trapper who was in the place for the winter with his partner, and two or three days later he killed the partner as he came in; this came out a long time afterward.

He took the largest cabin, a long, three-room building, and made it his winter quarters. One room in the end of the building he made into a prison for Mary's wolf-pup and only a crazy brain like his could have worked out the cruelty of it.

You see, he cut trap chains from some heavy traps belonging to the trappers he had killed here and wired them together at the ends with bale wire that had been used by summer teamsters bringing supplies in for some land-survey crew working somewhere near—map-making, the summer before.

When he got these chains, three of them, finished, he made a walrus-hide collar for Mary's wolf-dog, lashed it on with rawhide thongs and fastened the three chains to it. He'd done all this, mind you, before he'd let the wolf up on his feet from where he had him in the bag lashed on the sled.

He then carried the helpless wolf into the room and fastened him there with these chains running to staples driven into three walls so the wolf was held in the center with not over eighteen inches of slack in the chains.

You can see how the big wolf was absolutely helpless and held that way right in the middle of the room, so any direction he headed for, two chains at least would hold him back at the end of the eighteen-inch space, for the chains went three ways from the center to the three walls of the cabin and the wolf faced the door in the fourth wall which opened into the middle room.

The wolf had barely room to stand or lie down in, and no more, and there he stayed for nearly a year, during which time the crazy man tortured him every day systematically to make a killer out of him.

Every day he fed and watered the captive wolf and every day he beat and abused him enough to make him fight his tormentor.

Weeks went by and the program never changed. Each day the big wolf was fed and then bedeviled until he strained at his chains trying to reach his tormentor; and so, in time, the sound of a footstep, the opening of the door, or any other sound associated with the daily round of torture brought the wolf to his feet, red-eyed, with fangs bare and the lust to kill in his heart.

The minute the door opened the wolf lunged for it and if a chain had snapped the crazy Frenchman would have been torn to bits before he could have jumped back.

Time came when he put plenty of water and extra food within reach of the wolf, and then on the first flurry of new snow he hooked up his team and went into the North, silent as death, for he'd taken the bells from his dogs' harness and he did not sing as he ran.

Straight for McLeod's he held as fast as his team could go, keeping clear of all used routes and traveling as the wolf pack runs, on muscle and an empty belly.

THEN one night in another big blizzard he came singing up to the door of McLeod's post and stopped, leaving his dogs and his sled still hitched and ready to go.

We heard him—heard his wild song first—like the war-cry of a demon.

Almost before the noise of his coming stopped he threw open the door of McLeod's post and bounded in, bringing a wild gust of the wind and an avalanche of snow with him. He stood for a moment just inside the door—laughing like a loon on a summer night—just that wild and creepy. You've heard them, I know.

He did not shut the door, but stood just inside, his long legs wide apart, snow all over him—from parka-hood to mukluks—and laughing that wild, crazy laugh. In his right hand he had his walrus-thong dog whip—the one with the short walrus-tusk ivory handle.

He said nothing to any one, and there were ten men or so in there holed up like wolves to wait for the blizzard to blow itself out before they could go out on their own trails and trap-lines.

Suddenly he bounded across the post floor and crashed through the heavy door leading to McLeod's living quarters, where Mary McLeod was sitting talking to Kyrtle McDowell, for the two were planning their wedding that night.

Before any one could think the big musher had thrown an arm around the girl and was back into the storeroom again with that long walrus dog-whip whistling through the air like lightning flashes.

Kyrtle McDowell followed Tony back into the door he'd just crashed through. He had a service pistol in his hand leveled at the crazy Frenchman, but he never got to pull the trigger for Tony threw that terrible lash straight at the boy, and caught him squarely across both eyes! He dropped as if he had been shot and it was days before he could see at all and even now he has only one good eye. The other possibly may never be used again.

Karluk, the White Eskimo, made a move for a rifle leaning against the wall, and fell back with his throat cut wide open from one slash of the walrus whip and died on the floor before we could give him first aid.

Old Man McLeod, behind the counter, reached for a gun and nearly lost his hand when the lash hissed out and cut his wrist wide open, so that we had hard work to keep him from bleeding to death.

Then the crazy Frenchman, with Mary McLeod hanging in the crook of his arm, jumped through the door with a wild laugh and we heard him go singing away with the wind, taking Mary with him, still in the crook of his arm when we saw him last.

It had all happened in less than a minute, and we had one dead man and two badly wounded ones on our hands to save if we could.

Every one knew it was as good as suicide to attempt to follow Tony. Indeed, in the storm and half-darkness it would be impossible to keep him in sight, for there wasn't a team in the North that could run with the crazy Frenchman's wolves.

When the storm broke the sleds went out in all directions and every driver had a gun in hand loaded for Tony. He was a marked man, and every one was on the lookout to bring him in—alive, if possible, but bring him—for McLeod had posted a ten thousand dollar reward and the big musher was outlawed by his killing of Karluk anyhow.

But never a trace of him came for more than a year—then we got the first word.

It came not from the North, but down in the lower country around the Saskatchewan.

Tony had gone south that night from McLeod's—with Mary in the crook of his arm like a bag of wheat—and he'd run like the wind for a mile. Then he had stopped, opened his sled load and thrust Mary in among the furs as he had thrust the big, helpless wolf before and had covered her with heavy furs, which was likely all that saved Mary, for she was half-frozen as it was.

Then the crazy man had kept going for miles and miles on end, running south with the storm at his back and singing as he ran.

When his dogs played out he stopped, made a snow-shelter and slept for a while, taking care to feed his team first and letting them burrow in and bed down outside.

He left Mary, the same as he had left the big wolf, bundled up on the sled. Seemingly he had forgotten all about her.

Then, when he had rested a few hours, he got up, gave his team another feed, and threw the whip into 'em, headed south again.

Straight to the cabin where he'd left the wolf-dog he took Mary McLeod and when he reached it he put her in the end room by herself—in the room opposite the wolf's—letting her shift for herself there, which was no task for her, as she'd done it all her life. He furnished plenty of grub, wood and water and the bed was already loaded with furs and blankets, so there was no hardship for her.

He left her alone in her own end of the building after seeing to it that she could not by any possible means escape.

He did not even talk to her, nor bother her in any other way. He took good care that she had plenty of food, water and wood. For the rest, she was left as utterly alone as if she was on an island in midocean.

Mary knew nothing about the wolf-dog chained in the far end of the building and tortured already to the point of insane ferocity, so that man meant nothing to him but something to kill, provided he could get within striking distance.

For two weeks or so following Mary's capture, the Frenchman went back to his regular routine of bedeviling the chained animal, to arouse all the hatred he could in the poor beast and to show him that man meant pain to him whenever he came in sight.

Yet he took good care to feed him and give him plenty of water, to the end that he should remain well conditioned, for it was no part of Tony's plan to have the big dog lose any of his great strength. The strenuous physical efforts of the wolf to reach the

man during the daily torture furnished exercise enough.

Time came when Tony brought a store of wood into Mary's room and placed extra water and food where she could get it, but he said never a word to her.

Then at dusk he hooked up his team just as a blizzard started, and in a minute he and his silent wolves had faded into the north, going like the wind almost straight into the teeth of the storm.

The bells were mute and there was a shivery grimness about the crazy Frenchman's every move, for he was going on business of his own, running like an evil ghost.

THE Northwest Mounted station at McLeod's is half a mile south of trading-post, so nobody knew when the crazy Frenchman, leaving his team safely tied in the willows a mile away, slipped up four or five days later and waited outside until young Kyrtle McDowell came out of the station door.

McDowell did not know there was a soul about until Tony's hand went over his mouth and he felt a gorilla-like arm about his waist as he was swept up bodily and borne away like a helpless child.

Into the willows he was carried, his arms pinioned to his sides by the grip of his captor, and his voice stopped by the great hand that closed over his mouth and almost strangled him.

Like a wild bull the crazy Frenchman ran for his sled with his man dangling as easily as a doll in his arm.

A mile from the post he stopped, disarmed his captive, trussed him up and shoved him in the sleeping-bag, just as he'd shoved the big wolf in the same bag a year before and later treated Mary McLeod to the same experience.

It was no discredit to McDowell that this was so, for he had been taken unawares by a giant who was also a maniac and had the strength of ten in his muscles. The young man did not even have a chance nor could he reach the gun at his belt.

Southward then the crazy Frenchman started, his silent team running tirelessly and with no more noise than the wolf pack would make on a hunting run, and you know that a wolf never tongues, except for a mate or to tell the world he has killed his meat.

When the lead dog began to tire, Tony pulled up at a willow thicket, built a snow-shelter and camped for a brief rest.

He took good care of his team and his captive too, and then had a little sleep, propped up with his back against the overturned sled so that he would wake up at the least move or noise in camp.

When he did awaken it had begun to snow again and the wind was rising. It was Tony's kind of traveling weather, and for the first time on the trip he started out singing as he ran, and it was a song to make the hearer creep, for it was weirdly wild and full of the lilt of death.

Down-country with the blizzard at his back the crazy man went until he ran his dogs off their feet and had to stop to rest them, though he made no job of sleeping for himself. He could have kept the pace going for hours.

As soon as they could travel he had the dogs up and going again and a gaunt, famished-looking lot they were, too, even though he fed them all they could use and carry their speed.

The wild run finally ended at the log cabin where he'd left Mary and the wolf-dog when he started north for McLeod's. It did not take Tony long to fix his dogs and his sled safely and then to carry young McDowell inside.

Throwing off his fur traveling clothes, Tony built a roaring fire in the fireplace of the middle room. Then he untied young McDowell and stripped his heavy clothing off as he'd undress a child, his crazy eyes losing never a move the young man made.

And now mark the insane cunning of this crazy giant and how he planned his revenge on the girl who had refused to marry him.

With caribou thongs he tied young McDowell's hands, then placed him in one of the rough chairs and fastened his ankles to the chair legs so that any violent movement on the boy's part would upset the chair and throw McDowell on his face, helpless on the floor. And caribou leather is the one leather in the North that never stretches. Did you know that? Well, it is a fact.

Laughing wildly and singing a savage chant, the Frenchman worked swiftly and with the efficiency of a man who knows exactly what he wants and goes ahead and does it.

He opened the door into Mary's room and brought her to where she could see

McDowell, her lover. Then while Mary screamed and fought, he tied her to another chair as he'd tied the boy, singing boisterously and laughing at Mary's feeble efforts to stop him.

He moved the boy's chair up to within six feet or so of the door to the room where the big wolf was chained and then he moved Mary's chair over toward the fireplace, which brought the girl to the side of young McDowell, who sat facing the door of the room where the wolf-dog was chained.

Both of them were perfectly helpless to escape or to render aid to each other beyond what they could say to cheer each other up.

Taking a short whip from the wall the crazy man opened the door leading into the wolf-dog's room, stepped inside and began to lash the chained animal.

Not hit or miss, mind you, but in a cold, calculated, expert manner he laid the lash out, picking the tender hose, the open mouth, the sensitive ear-tips—every tender part on the big, helpless wolf's head—to cut with the terrible tip of that thong. And cut it did. Every time it touched at any point the red blood began to drip.

Without haste, laughing at the great brute's silent struggles, the big musher threw the lash as accurately as a bullet, torturing the animal until his eyes glowed like rubies and his jaws dripped froth that was reddened by the trickling of his own blood.

The big wolf was tortured until he was as insane as the man who held the whip. But he made no sound and Mary did not know what was going on.

Then Tony stepped back, leaving young McDowell's chair directly in front of the chained demon.

With a stroke of his knife the crazy man slashed the thongs binding the young man's arms to his chair, then reached over and placed the ivory walrus tusk handle of the whip in his hands.

"Now yo' goin' have nice leetlee fight wit my *tan-i-gi-dan*, my leetlee humming-bird, Ah'll theenk, Mist Mackadow!

"Me, Ah'll have heem h'all train' for yo' so yo' have fine tam Ah'll theenk so. Yo' see Ah'll have eet those chain so Ah'll go to those door an' pooul it wan leetlee pooul on streeng a', bah gar, w'at yo' theenk, eh? Those chain she's drop from the wall an' mah leetlee *tan-i-gi-dan*, mah leetlee humming-bird, she's loose! Bah gosh, yes!

"Yes, sar, she's h'alls loose, heem, an' she's goin' try for h'eat yo' hup!

"Now Ah'll have geeve it to yo' my wheep; she'll have it one good tusk handle for yo' so yo' can keel him, dat leetlee *tan-i-gi-dan*,—eff yo' ver' strong an' ver' queek—yes! W'at yo' teenk for dat—*hein?* Pooty good—yes?

"But eff you'll not be so queek—huh? W'at yo'll teenk goin' for happen den—huh?

"Oh, well! Ah'll goin' weesh yo' plent' luck—me!

"W'en yo'll get done those fight, m'sieu, Ah'll goin' geeve it yo' good leetlee bury in de grave, den Ah'll goin' laugh an' tek it yo' woman an' goin' Hudson Bay—yo' know dat place? Huh? An' Ah'll trade heem, those woman, to w'ite Eskimo—*Bien!*

"She's goin' pay it wan beeg price for wan w'ite woman, does w'ite feller hup dat way—yes? Yo' theenk not—*hein?*

"Now Ah'll goin' loose it those streeng, lak Ah'll say, an' let those leetlee *tan-i-gi-dan*, those leetlee humming-bird, loose, so yo'll goin' get h'all ready now for dose beeg fight lak Ah'll been tell yo'!"

The crazy man turned and went to the outside door, stepped out, held the door open a crack, and pulled a thong.

The chains dropped from all three walls at the same time, clanking to the floor with a rattling noise in the still room.

The great wolf was free!

RED-EYED, with bloody foam dripping from fangs, bared by upcurled lips, stiff-legged, with hair roached up along his great back, the huge brute, driven insane by abuse, which had made him a killer, with only one thought in his addled brain, to destroy man, advanced slowly toward McDowell, who sat waiting for death, his ankles still lashed to the chair legs so he could not move and with no weapon save a short whip with a walrus-tusk handle, tightly gripped in his right hand.

At the door the crazy Frenchman stood peering through the crack, a silent, insane laugh in his eyes—waiting.

Mary McLeod, lashed to her chair, sick in the very soul of her, helpless to move and with her senses reeling from the devilishness of it, sat still, watching the horrible, slow, stiff-legged, creeping walk of the wolf-dog as he came forward, pacing his distance to spring at McDowell's throat.

A step farther and it would end.

Faintly, from drawn lips, the wolf caught a whispered word—

"Lemolo!"

Instantly he stopped. His great head swung toward the sound, wonderingly.

The girl had fainted.

The wolf's head swung back to McDowell. He was puzzled. The boy sat still as death.

Again the bloody muzzle slowly pointed to the girl; the red, bloody nostrils quivered, questioning the air. The big nose went up a little, the red eyes half closed, the standing hair on the big brute's back began to settle down a little.

Sick, bleeding, brutally abused, until his mentality was little else than chaotic ruin, the big wolf was hesitating, trying the best he knew to remember something with his bleeding, battered nose—something he loved as he loved life—yet could not place or quite recognize.

His swollen eyes were of little use, and Mary McLeod's chair was in shadow against the snow-reflected light of the uncurtained window.

The elusive scent came to the poor brute faintly, so faintly that it meant nothing definite. It was merely an echo of some forgotten thing, nothing more. His sick, abused nose could not remember—he was sorely puzzled.

Tony, the crazy Frenchman, who knew dogs—and wolves—stood peering through the crack of the open outside door, watching silently.

He, reading the signs, knew what had prevented the wolf from springing straight at McDowell's throat.

Silently he opened the door, swung that walrus-thong dog-whip of his and threw the lash in across the room, straight against the great wolf's side and left a red half-circle cut clear to the rib-bones.

The wolf turned and leaped all in one motion and his great body crashed against the door as Tony slammed it in his face, a split second ahead of death.

The big brute, half-stunned by the impact, staggered to his feet, bit at the wound in his side and began to rage at the barred window, the chains still dragging from his collar, clanking and rattling on the floor.

Mary McLeod struggled back to consciousness again and sat dazed, watching the raging wolf. He meant nothing to her —yet.

McDowell tugged frantically at the thongs that bound his ankles to the chair. If he could get loose he could soon get a weapon and save Mary and possibly himself.

The shadows cleared from the girl's mind.

"Lemolo!" she called.

It was scarcely more than a whisper and the wolf insanely persisted in trying to leap through the barred window.

McDowell kicked the thongs loose and jumped for an ax, standing beside the fireplace where Tony had left it.

As he turned to attack the wolf, Mary McLeod found her voice and screamed:

"Lemolo! Lemolo Kowmux!"

The wolf stopped as if shot, and stood still.

"Oh, wait, Kyrtle! Wait!" McDowell stood still.

"Lemolo! Come, boy! Come, Lemolo!"

The big, half-blind wolf walked, stiff-legged across the room, straight toward that voice. His crazy brain was beginning to wake up, to come back to sanity.

Mary kept talking to him and the wolf kept coming until his battered nose touched her dress, and he lay down, his bloody tongue lapping at her bound and helpless hand.

McDowell started toward Mary. The wolf did not move, but a quiet little growl rumbled in his great chest. McDowell stopped.

The outside door was thrown open and Tony stepped inside. The long walrus-hide whip hissed through the air and caught the wolf on the hip and seemed to bring the big brute back with it, so quick was the animal's response to the Frenchman's torture. Tony was outside just barely in time again.

While the wolf raged at the window trying to reach the laughing Frenchman again, McDowell's knife slashed the thongs that bound Mary to her chair and she ran across the room, calling to the wolf and catching his great bloody head in her encircling arms.

The big fellow forgot his rage and quieted down. He had gotten it all straight—this was his best loved remembrance—the woman of his puppy days.

"Quick! Take him in the other room and shut the door! I believe I can get the Frenchman! Hurry!" said McDowell.

Mary did as she was told, closing the door behind her.

In a moment the cabin was still as death and McDowell stood against the door by the wall, a billet of fire-wood in his upraised hands, waiting.

Two minutes passed; three. Then the door-latch raised silently, the door began slowly to move and the crazy man's eye was at the crack, peering in.

He saw nothing but the empty room.

Cautiously, slowly the door opened until it was wide enough for Tony to put his head through; then McDowell's club fell.

When the crazy Frenchman awoke he was handcuffed to the chains he had used to hold the big wolf and these were spiked to the wall in such manner that he could move not more than eighteen inches.

"Dufrain, I arrest you in the name of the King for the murder of Karluk and at least four other men," said McDowell, who belonged, you remember, to an outfit that makes it a point to bring in its man.

The Frenchman, blank-eyed, looked vacantly at the officer.

"Hey? W'ats dat? Huh! Dat leetlee *tan-i-gi-dan,* de leetlee humming-bird, he's mek de fine lead dog, Ah'll tell yo' dat! Yes, saire! She's one —— fine wolf—heem!" he replied.

Mary dressed the wounds of the finest wolf-dog in the world and in time nursed him back to sanity and finally to at least the toleration of her husband, Sergeant McDowell, of the N. W. M. P.

THE DYNAMITE BOYS

by H. H. Dunn

MEXICAN rebels to the number of fourteen hundred, under the notorious Emiliano Zapata, were besieging the garrison of thirty-seven *rurales* in the town of Jojutla. All day the roll of rifle fire had come from the revolutionists posted in buildings around the *cuartel,* while the sharper crackle of machine-guns and the tearing bark of Mausers had answered from the barracks, which, with its three-foot walls of stone, stood fast against all the lead the Zapatistas could pour into it.

Dusk came on, and the rebels, as is customary with Mexican revolutionary forces, drew off from the attack to prepare their food and stimulate themselves with looted liquor for the next day's fighting. Posting sentinels at the barred windows, the federals likewise ceased firing, and the majority of them gathered in the *patio* of the *cuartel* for their evening meal. Casually and cautiously, here and there, a civilian appeared on the streets. As if by accident, two small boys, barefooted and ragged, came wandering down the street in front of the barracks. Whistling to them, another lad strolled in from the opposite corner. All three, none of them more than twelve years old, fell to playing in the dust directly in front of the main doorway of the *cuartel.*

For ten or fifteen minutes they played, until the federal sentinels ceased watching them. Then two of the little fellows drew cigars from their tattered shirts and started smoking them as they played. Suddenly, the three leaped to their feet and began chasing each other up and down the length of the barracks. A few minutes of this and all three came together again in front of the door. Three slim little arms rose and fell, there was a triple crash at the foot-thick mahogany door, whose great slabs splintered and fell inward, leaving the archway empty.

The boys, leaping wildly this way and that, started in three directions, but one of the federal sentries, rousing himself more quickly than his companions, fired once, twice, and one of the lads became merely a little bundle of rags in the dust of the road. Charging across the little plaza from their hiding-place in a private residence, two hundred picked Zapatistas, armed only with machetes and pistols, dashed at the doorway, into it, and were slaughtering the surprized garrison before the *rurales* could seize their rifles.

I had seen the dynamite boys—*los muchachos de dinamita*—in action, and one of them had paid with his life for the victory of the Zapatistas. Later in the history of Mexican revolutions, for this was early in 1911, these little fellows were to become important factors in the battle of banditry against government. Indeed, some of them were to be

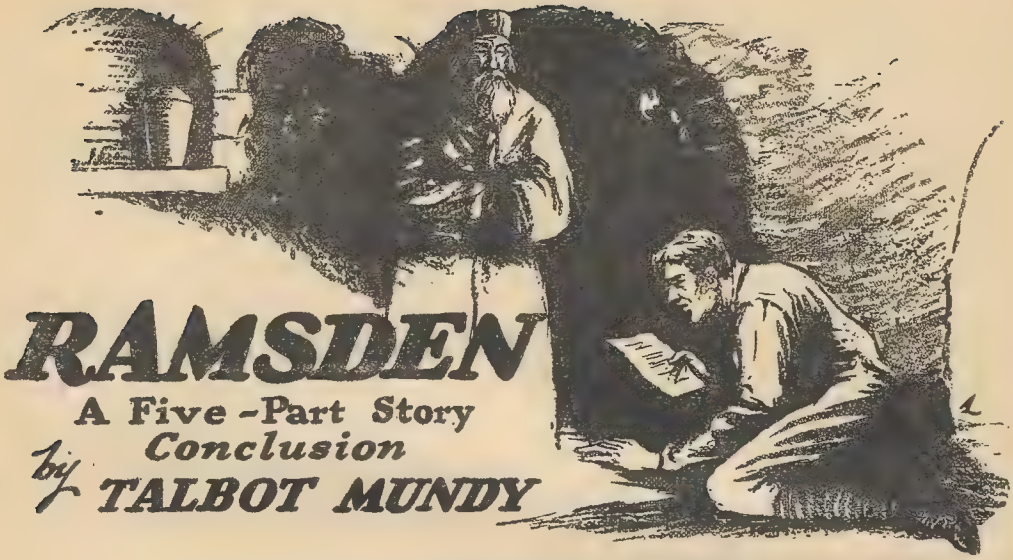
decorated for their bravery, and not a few have grown up to be officers of the present Mexican federal army. Usually about ten years old, never more than fifteen, their very youth enabled them to approach barracks and entrenched positions when an adult would have been shot down as soon as he appeared.

Their weapons were—and are, for they still operate with the roving bandit bands—little bombs, usually small tin cans filled with dynamite, or, that explosive being unobtainable, with ordinary black powder, tamped in tight, sometimes packed with pebbles, old nuts, fragments of iron, or even nails. Most of these bombs are made by the women, the *soldaderas*, who follow revolutionary armies throughout Latin America, working in some safe place behind the rebel lines. Each boy is given two or three of them, with short, very short, fuses attached, and a cigar, the smoking of which is not unusual among lads of this age in Mexico. If the revolutionary leader does not care to wait for dusk to charge the thick-walled *cuartel*, he orders his men to cease firing, and apparently withdraws from the attack, often lying quiet for an hour or two, until the town or village begins to believe the battle is over, and the people come again to the streets.

The boys, who are probably the youngest soldiers of fortune in the world, face triple chances of death: They may be shot as they approach the *cuartel;* they may be blown to bits if they hold the short-fused bomb one second too long; and they are very likely to be shot down as they attempt to run away after hurling their primitive grenades against the door. Not infrequently, after they have done their duty, they are caught in an enfilading fire from the rebels themselves, and killed by accident, as it were.

Sometimes, though not usually, these little fellows are sent to the roofs of surrounding houses, from which they hurl bombs on the *azotea* of the *cuartel.* This is not so effective, since it merely opens the top of the barracks, and does not break in a way for the attacking revolutionists. When they are not working with dynamite, the boys are used as riflemen, and some of the crack shots of the new Mexican army were "dynamite boys" in days gone by. They first appeared at the battle of Iguala, where Ambrosio Figueroa, commander of the rebels, introduced them, in the early spring of 1911, and soon there were more youngsters trying to enlist as dynamite boys in the score of revolutionary armies than there were jobs for them. But their profession, if one chooses so to call it, was extremely perilous, and rarely a battle passed in which two or three of them were not killed, so that there soon came to be plenty of vacancies for ambitious young Mexicans with strong arms and plenty of nerve.

One of them, little Calixto Reyes, who became known throughout southern Mexico as *Pan Tostado*—Toasted Bread—because "he was not afraid of fire," survived from the battle of Jojutla, in 1911, to the present, when he is a captain of artillery in the Mexican federal army. The majority of these little daredevils, however, became bandits as they grew older, finding it easier to loot horse, saddle, rifle, ammunition and food than to work for any or all of them. Another giving the name of Rafael Jimenez when joining the forces of Margarita Neri, at the battle of Chilpancingo, proved to be a girl, when her dead body was picked up after the fight. But this is the only instance known of a "dynamite girl," among all the scores of youngsters who won more than one battle for the Mexican revolutionists.



RAMSDEN

A Five-Part Story
Conclusion

by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "The Dancing Girl of Gades," "Tros of Samothrace," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

RAIT and I were in Darjiling when I received a letter from one Elmer Rait, with whom I had been in partnership. He said that he was in Tibet looking for a place called Sham-bha-la, where there were ancient manuscripts beyond price; and begged me to come and help him. He said he thought he could get there, but was equally sure that he couldn't get back.

At the time, the Tibetan border was closed by both the British and the Tibetans, so we had to move carefully. We took the *babu* Chullunder Ghose, and picked up Narayan Singh, the fighting Sikh, at Delhi. Then we went to the house of Benjamin, who knew more about the East than any one we could think of.

Benjamin objected, but finally gave us letters which would take us through his secret route on our promise to look up his son-in-law, who was lost in Tibet.

He dyed my skin and Grim's, and we went forward. Two Tibetans, Tsang-Yang and Tsang-Mondrong, dogged our steps and we had to keep them with us so they wouldn't betray us. One of them had a wallet containing another plea for help from Rait, which he had stolen from the other. So, they made us safe—while fighting among themselves.

The message was in code embodied in a very personal letter a woman had written to Rait. It showed him up for the utter cad we already knew him to be.

When we were camped at the mouth of the Zogi-la pass Mordecai, Benjamin's son-in-law, came staggering in out of a blizzard with a horrible tale of his experiences among the Tibetan monks, and of the treachery of Rait who had betrayed him into their hands. He died the same night and we pushed on through the storm-bound pass to the town of Leh and the fortified house of Sidiki ben Mahommed, a friend of Mordecai's.

Here there came to us two visitors. The first was Lhaten, a quiet, forceful man with blue eyes and a ring that covered a whole joint of his finger. He warned us of the difficulty of entering Sham-bha-la, and gave much good advice mingled with cryptic utterances about the way we might or might not travel. He seemed to be "on the inside" of the mysterious forces of this mysterious country, and Sidiki ben Mahommed paid him great respect.

After he had gone, we heard a great commotion outside and found the two Tibetans, Tsang-Yang and Tsang-Mondrong, dead in the yard, with their noses and ears cut off. When we came back we found our second visitor.

He was a tall, strong-looking man with yellow eyes and a mass of black hair. His manner was insolent and he warned us against Lhaten. Also, he told us that he could help us rescue Rait, and in proof showed us a letter from my former partner saying that he was a prisoner and being tortured.

We tried to take the man with us, and he hypnotized Narayan Singh into putting away his gun, and by some equally strange trick, threw me into a corner.

Sidiki ben Mahommed was worried about the murders, so we started out again through the snow, and were hardly on our way before Sidiki's house, fired by his newest wife, burst into flames. Later, we were waylaid by thugs, and I lost so much blood in the encounter that I fainted and had to be carried.

WE STOPPED in a monastery perched on a cliff-top while I recovered my strength. The abbot discussed philosophy with Grim—calling him "son" and explaining about the "White Lodge"

in Tibet, which studied the forces of life for good, and of the "Black Lodge" or Dugpas who studied the forces of life for evil. Lhaten came again and told us at length about the way to Sham-bha-la and the inner mysteries of the White Lodge, which he said affected humanity in a way much like that in which the discovery of electricity affects man's control of material forces.

Then Narayan Singh asked the abbot to show us a Dugpa, and there came in one who looked like the man who had thrown me into a corner of Sidiki ben Mahommed's living-room. Narayan Singh killed him, and we were obliged to leave the monastery, the rules of which forbade bloodshed. I gave Sidiki ben Mahommed a money-order to cover his loss, and sent him back to Leh.

They let us down over the edge of the cliff in a huge basket, and on the journey to a cave-shelter in the mountains I nearly died of my wounds. When I came to, Lhaten's teacher—*guru*—was in the cave talking to Lhaten and Grim. He had saved my life by some mental physicianship known to himself. His name was Rao Singh and he was one of the most striking men I have ever seen. On his finger was the same sort of ring Lhaten wore. We talked more of Sham-bha-la and of the difficult road to it.

We went on, in our quest for Rait, over impossible trails of ice and snow a day's journey into the mountains. At night we were met by an old woman with muscles of steel who brought us down into an extensive cave. In an inner room—a room that was covered, walls, ceiling and floor, with an opalescent mineral deposit—a group of men sat about a fire, talking. They were students—*chelas*—with their *guru*, who greeted us courteously and told the woman to feed us. Later, Grim talked to the teacher of Rait and Sham-bha-la, and by his wisdom and steadfastness convinced the old man that we were worthy of help.

SOON afterward Chullunder Ghose, Narayan Singh and I were herded away from Grim and the old *Guru*, and ordered to go to sleep in a far-off portion of the cavern, and the unearthly hag sat before the doorway keeping watch. Ill at ease, I slept and dreamt that Grim was undergoing terrible torture at the hands of the Dugpas. But soon Grim approached and explained that he had merely been talking to the *Guru*.

The next day, in a driving blizzard, we continued our trek over the treacherous, ice-coated mountain passes, the harpy-like old witch, gray hair flying in the wind and pikestaff in hand, leading the way. En route, while we stopped for a time in the meager shelter of a cave, the old woman begged Grim to give up this foolish trip—to break off all connection with the White Lodge, for Grim, by asking the aid of the *Guru*, had obligated himself. She pointed to her own wretched condition as indicative of the ingratitude of the White Lodge to its would-be initiates. But Grim had made his choice.

I went outside to see if it was still storming. I slipped and would have tumbled down the cliff at the cave entrance, had not Lhaten, mysteriously appearing, saved me. He warned us that the monks were watching us.

Shortly we had ample proof of this, for mighty icicles, that clung to hoary ledges far above our heads, cascaded through the air and crashed very near us. And soon we sighted a monastery, perched high on a mountain ridge. Our approach was heralded by a clangor of bronze bells and the blare of bugles. The yellow-robed monks showed no surprize at our coming. Obviously we had been well-observed. Then a curious thing happened. The head monk, observing Chullunder Ghose, who in appearance resembled nothing so much as a grinning Buddha, seemed to be deluded into thinking that the *babu* was really the god Chenresi; nor did Ghose try to disabuse the monk in his belief. Then the monk offered to find Rait if Chullunder Ghose would remain with him at the monastery. When this offer was refused, the monk shouted—

"You are spies!"

"We are," said I.

The monk suddenly left the room by an inner door.

"Let us go. Let us go," Chullunder Ghose begged Grim.

But the yellow monk soon returned, followed by a man in black, who looked very much like a stage assassin.

The yellow monk spoke:

"This man will go ahead and release the *chiling*. When you approach the Tsang-Po River, you shall find your man. Take him and depart."

Grim asked the monk why Rait might not be brought to the monastery. This question incited the monk to wrath and he left the room in a huff.

As we sat there, undetermined as to our next move, a woman sidled into the room. She was a Tibetan, of low class, pig-eyed, and covered with a generous veneer of dirt. She took an instantaneous liking to Chullunder, coyly addressing him as Chenresi. We urged the *babu* to play up to her, under the possibility that she might have information that might prove of value to us. At his shrewd questioning, she admitted that we were in all probability doomed by the Dugpas, but that if we cared to, we might attempt escape that night under her guidance.

That night Grim mysteriously disappeared. As the *babu* and I were looking for him, we were seized and bound by unknown hands. Then a man, dressed in Grim's clothes, stood over us and laughed at our predicament. Then in jeering tones, he promised us that we should soon learn the penalty for obtruding into the power of the Black Lodge.

And then began the most agonizing experience I have ever undergone. The *babu* and I were dragged into the night, and so bound that we could walk only with the greatest difficulty, we were forced to march over the icy passes, harassed from the rear by the kicks and pikestaffs of strange monks. When we slipped and fell we were beaten and kicked till we arose. The bitter cold numbed our bodies to pain, and at length we moved merely by instinct. Several times we dozed. The monks then rubbed our faces with snow and forced us to continue. At one time the *babu* attempted to jump over a precipice but the demoniac monks were too watchful, and caught him and beat him unmercifully.

"You will learn that pain and pleasure are the two opposites of one emotion," said the Dugpa in Jimgrim's clothes.

We were then tied leg to leg, the *babu* and I, and as consciousness ebbed, I felt myself being lowered head first over a precipice and swinging in a gray chaos of swirling snow.

CHAPTER XXI

RAIT—AND NARAYAN SINGH

I RECOVERED consciousness inside a place that looked as if it might have been a monastery, but there was not much left of it. I lay still, suffering acutely. Pain grew in proportion as senses awoke; and I had no control over my muscles, every one of which was aching as if tautened on the rack. It was the feeling of underlying cunning that I had experienced the day before, which kept me from crying aloud.

There were voices. I could see a broken roof above me, through which stars appeared. Below that there was a balcony without a railing. A long row of doorless cells gave on to it. The shadow of firelight and ascending smoke danced on an interior wall from which the plaster had fallen in flakes. I was lying on straw. There were lice eating into the scores of places where my skin was broken.

A shadow moved and I shut my eyes. A man leaned over me. A voice said in Tibetan:

"Are you sure you haven't gone too far? I should say he was dying."

Another voice, from somewhere near the fire, sneered arrogantly:

"Are you letting pity make a fool of you? The stronger he is physically, the closer he can go to death. The closer he goes, the easier it is to manage him. Come away, and mind your own business."

"But he is my business," said the first voice, and I felt a man lean over me again.

I peered under my eyelashes at a face between me and the starlight; blotched on one side by reflection from the crackling fire, which made it appear misshapen.

"I want him. That *babu* might serve for a spy in India, but where I'm going—"

"You'll never go until you learn obedience," the other answered. "If he has to be killed to teach you that lesson, killed he shall be."

"I beg pardon."

"There is no such thing as pardon. That is a delusion that the sentimentalists invented. Are you being sentimental?"

"No."

"Prove it."

"How?"

"Wake him up and show me where he keeps his tenderest emotions."

"Oh, that's easy. I was his partner. He is like a dog for friendship. He put up with more from me than a father would stand from his son, and when we dissolved the partnership at last you'd have thought he'd buried his wife and children. Hurt that *babu* if you want to see old Ramsden suffer."

"I have seen that. Show me something more acute."

"All right. I know how."

A hand took hold and shook me, scattering the pain through all my muscles like an overcharge from a galvanic battery. It was easy to pretend to wake up.

"Do you recognize me, Rammy? I am Elmer Rait."

He was no longer handsome. When I knew him formerly, his thin face had been finely chiseled—almost spiritual-looking; pale, but with a mirth about the corners of the mouth and an irreverent impertinence about the eyes that always disarmed anger.

Now there was not a fine line left. The surface had coarsened, in the way a drunkard's face does. The firm lips had slackened and the humor had all vanished from the corners.

But the Tibetan turban and the brown Tibetan cloak he wore looked natural to him, so that the change in his face was not so startling as it might have been. He was always a man who looked better in costume than in European clothes.

"DO YOU know me, Rammy?" he repeated, but the disgust I felt for him was like an anodyne that deadened pain; it did not make me garrulous.

"Well, you old fool," he went on, "you supposed I'd let you boot me out of partnership and not get back at you. You ditched me for that hypocrite Grim, and thought I'd let you get away with it. I knew you'd bring Grim; you'd have disappointed me if you hadn't. I warned you not too simply to make sure you would, you contrary old ass.

"Grim talked you into giving me the gate, though you denied it at the time. I don't doubt you'll deny it now, but you're a liar. I know better. Your beloved Jimgrim was my enemy, and you led him straight into my trap."

I closed my eyes to prevent him from discovering what effect on me his speech was having. He mistook that for a lapse into

unconsciousness and shook me, scattering the agony again through all my muscles. It was almost beyond endurance, but I managed to keep silent.

"Your Jimgrim was caught," he went on. "He was stripped, and he was whipped. He was told—just to make him a bit more miserable—that you turned yellow and betrayed him to save your own skin. He died thinking you were on your way to India. Now speak to me or I'll have to hurt you."

He laid his hand on me, and I saw by the flickering firelight that hand and wrist were bleached like parchment. Observing that I noticed it he thrust the hand close to my face.

"I've been through more than you have; but they killed Grim. I ordered you to speak. You'd better."

He shook me and I could not keep from groaning. Vertigo sent the fire and the walls of the building in streams around me, in which Rait's face seemed multiplied a dozen times. I imagined I was hitting out at Rait, trying to use my last remaining strength to knock him backward into the blazing fire. I believe, as a matter of fact, that I lay absolutely still; brain and body were not functioning together.

"Crude!" said the voice of the man who wore Grim's clothes. "You have told him the truth and he thinks you are lying."

His face evolved out of the whirling fire and walls, and when he touched my head the whirling stopped as if somebody had put the brakes on. I began to want to vomit.

"Rait," he remarked, "is such an amateur that he acts like a policeman with a witness. He is going to be shown how you can be made to tell things that are so deep in your consciousness you hardly know they exist. There!" he said, turning to Rait and continuing to speak English, "do you notice how he shuts his mind up like a tortoise pulling in its head? You must learn how to make him open it."

THEY walked away and I heard them talking in Tibetan over by the fire, but their talk was no more than an indistinct murmur. As cautiously as any tortoise I began to move my head to find out where Chullunder Ghose was, but the first man I saw was the one I had kicked. He was sitting propped against a pillar that supported the gallery. A number of monks sat near him, playing some kind of game with knuckle-bones on a board between their knees.

On straw, between them and the wall, Chullunder Ghose was lying, and about two paces beyond his feet there was a doorway with a broken door. The lower half was more or less intact, but the upper half appeared to have been smashed in and there

were three great gaps in the splintered woodwork, which framed three irregular sections of the starlit sky. I could see one star—a big one—and began to wonder which it was.

The star was suddenly obscured. I blinked, suspecting that one of the blows on the head I had received might have injured my eyesight. The star appeared again, and was again obscured, so I began to trust my eyes. I found that by enduring agony in every muscle I could move my hand so as to screen the firelight, and when I had stared at the star for about a minute I was nearly sure I could see the shadowy, faint outline of a man's head between it and the splintered edge of the broken woodwork.

Instantly there returned that peculiar feeling of cunning that had kept the life in me the day before. I have called it cunning, but there is no one word I can think of that conveys that feeling of the stealthy approach of unknown agencies, resourceful and stored with surprize. It was not exactly confidence, but it was expectation. The nearest to it I can think of is the feeling one has at a well-played melodrama when the mine is laid, the fuse lighted, there seems no way out of the disaster and yet—down inside you—you are sure there is a secret, irresistible solution in reserve.

Rait got up from the fire and came to talk to me again, his back toward the door so that I could no longer see it; but the man in Grim's clothes by the fireside was in full

view. He had let his hair down and was combing it, with loathsome motions more suggestive of a woman than a man.

"Rammy, old top, I believe I will save you," said Rait, "if you'll swallow your pride and just ask me to do it."

I knew he was lying. He had long ago surrendered his own will to that hermaphrodite who sat and combed his silky hair. Self-control is manhood, and I felt toward Rait as I would toward the corpse of some one who had died of leprosy.

"You see, Rammy, I have made my goal," he went on. "They are teaching me things you've never dreamed of—things that can't be learned until you have de-humanized yourself. We're not allowed to fail at anything. If I can't persuade you to put yourself entirely in my power, of your own will, they'll order me to kill you and I'll have to do it. But once you're in my power, and they're sure of it, I can do with you as I see fit. Yield and I'll promise to release you afterward. You'll find it isn't any worse than taking anesthetic—not in your case—you're such a physical old specimen."

I did not dare to answer, I was so sure that any kind of answer would increase my disadvantage. Not imagining that I could understand his method, I was none the less sure it included getting me to admit to myself that I was at his mercy. If I had argued, cursed him, or acknowledged the necessity of speaking to him, that would have opened a door in my mind through which he might insinuate some trickery. I did not reason it—I simply followed intuition and lay still.

HE BEGAN to try the sort of blandishments he used to use in the old days when he wanted me to back him in some scheme I didn't like.

"I know your point of view is different from mine, but what harm will it do you to give in? Can't you be generous when it won't cost you anything? I'm not pretending you'd enjoy the life I'm going to lead, but you don't have to lead it and you'll save yourself an awful lot of agony by doing what I ask. I've got to make you crawl to me. These people insist on proofs before they'll teach any further; and they know things I've simply got to know.

"I tell you what, Rammy; you've had a raw deal and something's coming to you. Give in, and I'll not only release you afterward but I'll guarantee to use my stuff to help you in any scheme you like—no matter what it is."

If I could write down how I loathed him, what I wrote would burn the paper. But suddenly it occurred to me even that sensation of disgust was dangerous—that it was like a poison-gas by means of which, in some way that I did not understand, he might undermine my obstinacy and then overwhelm my will.

I tried to pity him. I even tried to like him, summoning to mind the days when he had played the banjo to our gangs of niggers to keep them good-tempered when we had to accomplish two days' work in one. In those days Rait had been a wonder around a mining camp, and he and I together had accomplished things that other men had thought impossible.

To avoid his eyes I looked up through the hole in the roof. He believed I was praying, and laughed.

"Do you still think your God is in heaven?" he sneered. "Do you believe in miracles?"

At any rate, I did believe my eyes. Against the luminous, clear night sky I had seen Grim's face with firelight on it, looking down at me. It was but a momentary glimpse, but I was absolutely certain.

The man in Grim's clothes left the fire and came and stood beside Rait.

"You're an amateur," he sneered. "I turned him over to you ready, but look at his eyes now. Can't you see the change in him? All my work would have to be repeated before you could hope to manage him. You'll have to kill him now. Maybe that will strengthen your own will. Go on, kill him. If it weren't your first case I would make you use your fingers. You may use your knife, but do it slowly and so rid yourself of any squeamishness you have left. What are you—"

HIS head split down the middle as a saber struck him from behind. He fell across my legs, and in his place there stood Narayan Singh, teeth flashing, eyes blazing, simmering with passion. His cheek-bones stood out like a skeleton's. He turned on Rait.

"Hello, Narayan Singh!" said Rait.

He ducked as the saber swung for him. It missed and Rait leaped backward. He

was instantly surrounded by the monks and I could see him groping with his right hand into the long cloak he wore. Then Grim came down by a rope through the hole in the roof and Rait fired point-blank at the two of them—missing, as invariably happens when a man divides his target. With a roar like a wounded tiger's then Narayan Singh went headlong at the crowd of monks. Rait swung the man whose ribs I had broken in between him and the saber and the point went home. Grim bent down over me:

"How are you, Rammy? How's Chullunder Ghose?" I was puzzled because he did not help Narayan Singh go after Rait. The Sikh had driven all the monks, with Rait cowering in their midst, out through the door and was standing on guard. The dawn was just beginning then to change the color of the sky.

"Are you two alone?" I asked.

"Not we."

Grim walked to where Chullunder Ghose was lying and made noises in his teeth. He tried to pick him up but Narayan Singh glanced over his shoulder and asked—

"Sahib, may we make haste?"

So Grim began to drag Chullunder Ghose toward where I lay, just as another pistol-shot directed at Narayan Singh spat through the doorway and a bullet clipped the stonework of the upper gallery.

Chullunder Ghose was totally unconscious. Grim let him drop beside me and then ran toward a closed door on my left hand, underneath the gallery and nearly opposite that other where Narayan Singh stood guard. Grim was wearing an odd-looking costume, but I could not distinguish details.

He picked up a heavy stone that had fallen from the gallery and began to smash the clumsy iron lock. It broke after a dozen blows and he opened the door, letting in a blast of icy wind along with the first gleam of sunlight. That door faced due east.

Then he returned to me, and as he stooped I saw he wore a turban made of dark-brown silk.

"Can you crawl?" he asked.

I could not, but I told him I could, because I wanted to stay and watch Narayan Singh.

"Sure! Women and kids first—just like you, —— you!" he said cheerfully and took hold of Chullunder Ghose under the armpits, dragging him heels downward to the door under the gallery.

I remembered the bag then, into which all my belongings including a pistol had been thrown, and presently I saw it over near the fire. I called out to Narayan Singh that he would find two pistols in the bag, but he answered over his shoulder that he did not dare to leave his post to go and look for them. So I began to try to crawl, pulling my legs out from under the lifeless body of the man whom Narayan Singh had killed.

It makes my flesh creep now to think of how it hurt to cross those twenty feet of floor. When I reached the bag and opened it at last there were no pistols in it—nothing but my watch, a little money and some odds and ends.

I warned Narayan Singh that the enemy had all the firearms, and as I spoke three shots spat through the doorway and struck slabs of plaster off the wall. The light was probably confusing to a monk unused to firearms.

Then Grim came for me and put his hands under my armpits from behind. I tried to resist. I could see a man with bow and arrows aiming at Narayan Singh and there were six or seven men with swords and daggers ready to pounce on him if the arrow should hit the mark. I told Grim to go and help Narayan Singh, but he began dragging me across the floor toward the door under the gallery. An arrow whizzed within six inches of me, and the next thing I remember we were outside in a bitter wind, with the sun shining straight in my eyes.

I was lying on a smooth rock with my back toward the building from which Grim had dragged me, and it was extremely difficult to see because of the blinding sunlight on the snow and because my head was swimming, but I got my bearings presently.

The building we had left was on a sort of island—a sheer-sided rock that rose from near the middle of a deep ravine. I could not see beyond the ruined building, but on the side on which I lay there was a narrow natural causeway, resembling a vein of quartz, that formed the only means of access to the flank of the ravine, where it seemed to disappear into a tunnel. The causeway was irregular and there was ice and snow in patches all the way along it. Midway Grim was carrying Chullunder Ghose, staggering under the weight.

In the ruined building there was the sort of noise that comes out of a slaughter-house. A moment after I had turned myself slowly in that direction, Narayan Singh came out, wiping his saber on somebody's turban. He had no scabbard. He stooped over me and asked whether I could hold the saber, but doubted my ability; so he passed the blood-smeared turban through the hilt and tied it to my waist. Then he hoisted me up on his shoulders, and I was glad he had tied the saber on; the pain would have made me let go of it.

He began to carry me along the causeway and I fainted again, I believe, from the agony caused by the jerky movement and from my own efforts to lie still, head downward over his shoulder.

At any rate, there is a lapse of memory until I discovered myself lying on an ice-patch midway along the causeway—possibly two hundred yards away from where we started. I was facing the ruined building, so could see comparatively clearly, with the sun behind me.

My view was from between Narayan Singh's legs. He had resumed the saber and had turned at bay against seven men who were advancing cautiously, their leaders rather hanging back but unable to retreat because the others pushed them forward. Then I heard Grim's voice—

"All right, Narayan Singh."

I was lifted from behind. Grim never was a weakling, but it puzzled me how he had found the strength to do that.

"Sorry if it hurts," he grunted.

He began to carry me, but turned to see whether Narayan Singh was following. He was not; he was facing the enemy, hilt high, his saber looking like a beam of sunlight. The advancing monks were sheltering their eyes under their left arms.

"Retire, Narayan Singh!" Grim called to him, but the Sikh did not move.

"Go thou, Jimgrim sahib!" he shouted back. "There comes one with a pistol."

I COULD see a man advancing slowly; he was nearly midway between the monks and the commencement of the causeway, framed exactly by the open door a hundred yards behind him.

Grim set me down, using time and thought to do it carefully, for I am no light weight.

"Will you come, or shall I come and make you?" he demanded.

"Nay! I see Rait!" the Sikh answered.

In a second he was charging straight at the advancing monks. The first three flinched and tried to turn, but there was no room to pass the four who blocked the way behind them. They struggled. One slipped and fell over, screaming as he summersaulted through the sunlit air. Then the Sikh was into them and five more went after the first, the saber licking out like lightning-stabs. The last one turned and ran, throwing his weapon away and picking up the skirts of his long cloak.

"Now come!" Grim shouted. But Narayan Singh went in pursuit.

The man with the pistol opened fire and at the third shot hit the monk, who toppled backward and went headlong into the ravine. A fourth shot whistled close to Grim and me. The man was dazzled by the sunlight; he kept bending his head to right and left, shielding his eyes with his left hand. Narayan Singh raced forward and Grim started after him, shouting to him to stop, but before he had gone ten paces the Sikh turned, waved his saber and shouted:

"Rait! I have him!"

He ran on again along the causeway. Rait reloaded and took aim, but the sun glared off the ice and off the quartz-like rock and three shots in succession missed, one splintering the ice near Grim's feet. Then a fourth shot hit the Sikh and staggered him.

His answering shout went echoing among the crags—

"Rung ho!"

Rait fired again, I think he hit a second time, but up—through his forearm—through the throat, and out behind his head the saber went with one of those long lunging thrusts for which Narayan Singh was famous.

"Rung Ho!" came the echoing shout again. Narayan Singh clutched air, fell forward on to Rait, writhed, slid—and the two went over, separating as they plunged into the abyss.

Grim glanced up at the sky after a moment.

"Vultures already," he said.

Then he stood still, looking down into the abyss, but some one fired a rifle at us from the ruined building, and a group of monks came out through the open door.

Grunting, Grim hoisted me up on his shoulders again and made all haste toward the tunnel-mouth at the causeway's other end, slipping, staggering, stumbling—ten times over we were closer than a hair's breadth of the edge—and when he laid me down at last in echoing darkness he collapsed beside me.

Then I heard a voice say in Tibetan: "Gently! Very gently!" I was lifted and laid on a litter, and for a long time I was conscious of a litter swaying under me and of the footfalls and the steady breathing of the men who carried it. Somebody covered my face with a cloth after a while and I believe I slept.

I dreamed about a ladder I was climbing —miles high and exactly upright. As I climbed, the lower rungs fell one by one, so there was no way down again. When I reached the top there was nothing there except blue sky and I stood swaying in the wind.

I began to lose my balance, until Grim leaned through the blue above me with an outstretched hand and called to me to jump.

I could not make it, and the last rung of the ladder began cracking underfoot.

CHAPTER XXII

THE HERDSMAN'S HUT

I AWOKE in a herdsman's hut. A gale was blowing and crisp snowflakes fell through a square hole in the roof, into a yak-dung fire that burned on a stone hearth underneath it.

I was lying against a partition that divided the hut down the middle. Men were talking on the other side of it in low tones, but it was difficult to hear because of the blustering wind, and equally difficult to see because the smoke explored the room in clouds before a little of it found its way out through the hole.

I tried to raise myself but had the sickening experience of feeling too weak. My mouth tasted as if I had been made to swallow medicine, and for a while I was still confused by the vivid dream from which I had awakened. Gradually, however, recollection came, and not long after that I began to distinguish Grim's voice, near my head, between me and the end wall. He was talking English.

"All the same," he said, "I would like to tell Jeff why you could not help us more definitely than you did. When Jeff comes to he will learn that your men brought litters, waited for Narayan Singh and me to rescue him and the *babu*, and then carried them all the way to this place. And I know my friend Jeff. He will ask why you could do that but couldn't help in the actual rescue. I'm not questioning your actions; I'm simply asking what to say to him."

"Tell him the plain truth," said Lhaten's unmistakable voice. "You may say we don't take life for any reason."

There was a pause. Then Grim resumed:

"He'll take my word for that, I don't doubt. But, as I say, I know him; he will feel as sorry about Narayan Singh as I do—very likely worse. He isn't demonstrative but—"

"I know," Lhaten answered. "He loves his friends, but he hasn't understood yet that death strengthens friendship rather than reduces it. We all die. We all meet again—some of us with fewer limitations and more knowledge. It was no harm that Narayan Singh should die fighting. Better that than be killed in a brawl or in an unjust cause, as so many soldiers die. Rait undoubtedly would have shot you and your friend Ramsden if Narayan Singh had not prevented."

"What makes you sure of that?" asked Grim.

"Knowledge," said Lhaten. "If you think a minute you will know too. Did you ever know a criminal to spare old friends who are ashamed of him? He hoped to be the perfect criminal, yet in his heart he knew he had neither the intelligence required for that, nor yet the courage. He was in the hands of little Dugpas, of the sort who aspire to be big ones but lack imagination. Those are as jealous as snakes. Their whole venom is jealousy and they had poisoned what was left of him.

"He hated you and Ramsden because he had failed. Didn't you hear Ramsden talking in his sleep—how he cried out that Jimgrim had died believing him an untrue friend? I don't doubt Rait had told him that."

"Well," said Grim, "when Ramsden wakes up he will ask why, if you and your

brotherhood know so much, you didn't protect us all from those black rascals. He'll say it was strange that you let me be knocked down and stripped before you stirred a finger, and still more strange that you let them be taken prisoners and carried off. What shall I answer him?"

"The plain truth."

"I don't know the truth of it," said Grim, "except that certain individuals have been kind enough to order you to protect us in all ways possible."

"In all ways possible," Lhaten's voice repeated. "But would you ask a musician to make inharmonies in order to teach music to you? Or must you think in terms of music before the musician's thought can reach yours?"

Grim seemed to be thinking that over. When he spoke at last I could almost see him smile:

"Do you think that explanation would be any use to Jeff? He likes his eggs fried both sides, with the date on 'em."

"IF HE can't understand, he must fail, that is all," said Lhaten. "Like any true musician, or poet, or sculptor, we are always doing our best to stir humanity. But artists can only reach such people as respond to the artistic impulse; others seem to look, or seem to listen, but the art means nothing to them and they either mock or misinterpret.

"We think thoughts—we breathe out principles. The Dugpas interfere in every detail of the lives of those whom they have in submission—and the poor fools call it luck, or the act of God, or Providence.

"You see, the Dugpas have persuaded a great number of people that neither they, nor we, exist; so, although crime, madness, suicide and discontent are on the increase, they who have authority ascribe it to all causes but the right one.

"Nevertheless, you may have noticed that benevolence and altruism and a spirit of inquiry also are increasing, in quantity as well as quality. That is because it makes no difference whatever what a man's religion or his politics may be; a principle is universal, and whoever apprehends one lives it, or begins to live it—until presently it bursts the bonds of his religion or his politics, exactly as a tree-root bursts the rock in which it grew.

"It is the object of the Dugpas to prevent men from grasping principles. I assure you, those were very little, unimportant Dugpas who had caught Rait and who attacked you; they were like the criminals who murder at the bidding of the unsuspected hierarchies that infest civilization."

"Well and good," said Grim, "we all know there are master-criminals who hardly ever get caught. But what am I to tell Jeff Ramsden? If I should ask him he would go the limit. His religion is friendship, if you can call that a religion. He would rather see a friend through to a finish, even when he doubts the outcome, than turn aside and make a profit on his own account. I don't want that. I would rather he should see the thing as I do and go forward on his own responsibility."

"Every man goes forward on his own responsibility," said Lhaten. "There is no escape from it. But no two healthy men think quite alike, or there would be no such thing as independent judgment. We never interfere with any one unless he reaches out to us. We could not help Rait. We could not even help that splendid man Narayan Singh—at least, not much—so long as he depended on his saber.

"Don't you see that to help a man win saber-fights is to increase his faith in sabers? We prefer to guide that valor and integrity into much more profitable channels. But how shall we guide unless the individual is willing to be guided? We are not Dugpas, who compel obedience. We are like musicians, who play harmonies for you to follow if you can. And just as, let us say, Beethoven could not compromise with those who did not understand him, or who detested his music, neither can we compromise. It is for you, or for any one else, to agree or not as you see fit.

"I will try to explain what happened. When you were in that monastery talking to the yellow lama you appealed to me."

"I did not," Grim retorted.

Lhaten laughed.

"Didn't you think of me?" he asked.

"Yes. I wished like the deuce you were there to explain why we were led to that place and how to get away."

"That opened a line of communication. I could reach you. I sent you a warning, but you did not understand it entirely; in fact, you hardly understood at all. What you did was to get up to go and explore.

It was a most emphatic warning against violence, because violence is the Dugpas' specialty, at which they can beat you easily. If you should win by violence against them you would merely play into the hands of other Dugpas, who are worse than they. So I warned you against violence. But how did you interpret it?"

"I received no warning," Grim answered.

"No? What did you do at the door of the stable?"

"I told Narayan Singh to stand guard outside, and I gave him my pistol."

"Why?"

"I hadn't used it for a long time. He had asked to look at it the day before. As he was going to stand outside I thought he might as well employ his time."

"Why did you leave him outside?"

"Impulse. No sense in two of us going in. I preferred to know exactly where he was, in case of need."

"Do you realize that if you had kept your pistol you would certainly have used it? If you had taken him into the stable with you there would certainly have been a fight. The noise would have brought Ramsden and Chullunder Ghose into the trap, and the outcome would have been much worse than it actually was. It was bad enough anyhow. Why didn't you cry out, when you shut the stable door and struck a match and knew you were surrounded?"

"It flashed on me that they would kill Narayan Singh the moment he should open the door. It was better to leave him outside to join forces with Jeff Ramsden."

"That decision saved you," Lhaten answered. "Do you remember what happened next?"

"Not clearly."

"WELL, they knocked you on the head and you had sense enough to lie still. Otherwise they would have killed you. They dragged you to that pile of sheepskins in the corner and lifted you up through a hole in the wall, that was almost entirely hidden by the shadows and a transverse beam. Up there in the hole they stripped you naked. And it was there that I found you later on."

"Where were you while this was happening?" Grim asked him.

"Too far away to have come to your help one second sooner than I did. Remember, I am nothing but a *chela*. I am not so limited as you in some respects, but I knew there was serious danger, and I warned you of it, meanwhile hurrying to get as near you as I could. Remember, I am not allowed to oppose violence with violence because that defeats its purpose. My effort was directed to inducing you to rise above it.

"I tried to reach all four of you. There was a woman in the monastery, who was being employed to stir up Ramsden and Chullunder Ghose. The Dugpas work on the principle that, if they irritate you, they will get action and the action will follow the line of least resistance.

"Ramsden was the man they wanted. They weren't so foolish as to think that that woman could inveigle him; they simply made use of her to irritate him, and presently Ramsden, Chullunder Ghose and Narayan Singh all walked into the trap."

"What saved Narayan Singh that time?" Grim asked.

"Fidelity. The man's sole thought was how to save his friends' lives. Even fighting can't entirely smother that fine motive. It enabled me to reach him; and I think I reached Ramsden at the same time. Ramsden was probably thinking of nothing but how to find you and protect you from the trap. Ramsden ordered Narayan Singh to go and find you if he could. The Sikh obeyed him and fell down a well in the dark, so his pursuers missed him. The well was not very deep but the rope was slippery with ice, so it took him nearly an hour to climb out."

"Do you mean you foresaw that?" Grim asked.

"Not I! No more than a musician foresees the effect of music on an audience. He merely plays the harmonies. Emotion does the rest. Have you not seen a beaten regiment stirred by half a dozen bugles and a drum until it rallies? That is the crudest possible illustration. True music appeals to the inner more than to the outer ear; it stirs that spirit in a man that catches inspiration. And the force I have been taught to use is ten times subtler than the rarest music. Let it only reach a man in a moment when his finest thought is active, and it will rend the veil between him and his own reality. Then he will do the right thing always—even if it means that he shall tumble down a well!"

"You saw him die," said Grim.

"There was a thought of hatred then. He hated Rait. He wanted his revenge on Rait. I could not make him hear. Did you try?"

"Yes. He disobeyed," Grim answered.

"Nevertheless, he very likely saved your life and Ramsden's. There are deaths much less magnificent than that," said Lhaten.

"Ramsden will want to know," said Grim, "why you could furnish stretcher-bearers and could come that long way with Narayan Singh and me, but could not lift a finger in the actual work of rescue. He's a whole-hearted old dog. He doesn't like men who appear to him to sit on fences when the issue is in doubt. I think I understand you, but I'm pretty nearly sure I can't explain it to him."

"Ask him then," said Lhaten, "whether, if he should wish to stop a dog-fight, he would get down and fight like the dogs with his teeth. And if not, why not? He will say he knows better. He is likely to admit that he would lose the whole advantage of superior intelligence and would find himself on a plane where the dogs were his masters.

"Does a fireman go into the fire? Does the conductor of an orchestra play all the instruments—even though in his day he has had to play many of them? Does the architect lay bricks? Does the poet set type? And if he who tends the beacon-light should leave it to direct the rescue, who could see? I am no match for the Dugpas if I try to fight them with their weapons. Each of us must use what he can use to best advantage, and there is deadly danger in another's duty, just as there is duty in another's danger. When Ramsden wakes ask him whether he had any sensation of power in reserve while he was in the Dugpas' hands. I did my best to stir that consciousness and once or twice I think I reached him."

THEY were silent for a long time after that. Outside it blew a hurricane that shook the roof, beating the smoke back through the hole and filling the hut with a stinging blue cloud. Hail and snow sizzled on the hearth and Grim went and stirred the fire to keep it from going out, heaping on dry yak-dung to protect it. He came and looked at me, but I pretended to be sleeping.

"How far are we from the goal?" he asked when he sat down again.

"If you mean geographically, about six days' march," said Lhaten. "You have already come a long way into Tibet. The elevation here is sixteen thousand feet."

"Am I going to be allowed to make it?"

"Yes. You."

"What about my friends?"

"That is not my business. I can't answer you," said Lhaten. "You might get there with your friends.

"Two explorers have passed near it within comparatively recent years. You would see no more than the explorers did—a very plain, uninteresting village, occupied by plain, uninteresting-looking people. There are no barbed-wire entanglements! But seclusion is something the Masters know how to preserve.

"I have authority to lead you in alone; and in that case you will be allowed to stay awhile—perhaps for quite a long time. But if you insisted on taking your friends without authority, you might exclude yourself."

"Can I obtain authority?" Grim asked.

"It may be. But I don't know and I promise nothing. No man is ever taken in on any other terms than on his own initiative and entirely of his own free will. So that would be Ramsden's affair."

"And Chullunder Ghose?"

"The same."

For a long time Grim was silent—for so long a time that I began to think he had left the hut without my knowing it. But at last I caught the familiar grunt that he makes when he has considered all the points of something and rejected it.

"I will not go in without my friends," he said, and stirred the fire again.

"Is that exactly fair to them?" asked Lhaten. "You impose on them responsibility for your success or failure."

"No, I don't," Grim answered bluntly. "I know —— well Rammy wouldn't make that grade and leave me, if positions were reversed. He'll lie about it, naturally. He'll even try to quarrel, if all else fails. It won't be his fault if I don't go on and leave him. It will be my independent judgment as to what I personally care to do. That settles it. All three of us, or none!"

"Let me see—who was it settled that the

sun goes round the earth and that the earth is flat?" asked Lhaten. "You will find," he added, "that your friend Ramsden has been listening to every word we have said."

Grim got up, to come and test the truth of that remark; but Lhaten went out, letting in a hurricane of wind that blew all the fire off the hearth before the door slammed shut again.

So Grim had to gather up the fuel and relay the fire before he could attend to me, and I had time to think what I would say to him.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHULLUNDER GHOSE RECOVERS

GRIM pulled up the yak-skin bench and sat beside me. Due, I think, to the tremendous elevation and, perhaps in part, to the recent torture I had undergone, the edges of thought, if I may coin an expression, stood out definitely. There was no confusion between yes and no. Physically I was weaker than I ever remember to have been, but thought was sharp and vivid—concentrated. The essentials were obvious.

"Rammy, old top, is it true? Were you listening?" Grim asked me. "Now see here— You and I have stuck together, and as a general thing you have left the leading up to me. —— you, you've been too lazy to argue. You'd rather work like a locomotive to prove me right than go to the trouble of disagreeing. We never have disagreed, and we're not going to this time. But here's a crisis and it's your turn to decide which way the cat jumps. Do your job."

"How is Chullunder Ghose?" I asked him.

"Rotten. But he'll pull through. Lhaten brought some medicine."

"Can he talk yet?"

"No. But look here, there'll be no committee work on this. If you say 'forward,' forward we go. And if you don't like the prospect of spending perhaps three years in a Tibetan village, learning stuff that will upset all your previous conclusions—after which we'll probably be turned loose to be hated like —— by half the men who used to like us—just say so and we'll turn back. For that's all there is to it."

It was clear enough what Grim wanted to do. His eyes almost gleamed through the smoke.

"If this were poker, any fool could tell you held four aces," I remarked. "Do you guarantee to accept my decision as final?"

"If you play fair," he answered, "yes. But none of your concessions to my prejudice. What I've got to know is, what would you do if left to yourself—supposing I weren't here, for instance. If you don't convince me that you're answering on the level, I will vote to go back."

His eyes were fixed on mine and it would not have been any use to try to shift ground. On the other hand, no argument of his was going to make me stand in his way. He was aching to go to Sham-bha-la.

So was I. But I had less chance of getting in than he had; and was much less likely to be able to understand the mysteries, that I supposed would be explained if we should gain admission.

"When we agreed to enter Tibet, we all took the same chance, didn't we?" I said at last. "Narayan Singh lost out, as you or I might have lost out just as easily. Now, once again— Will you accept my answer?"

But he put me through a third degree before he pledged himself, endeavoring to probe for mental reservations. In the end, because habitually I had never tricked him, he committed himself—

"Shoot!"

"Forward," I said, "as soon as Chullunder Ghose is fit to travel; and the devil take the hindermost. Whoever makes the grade, goes in. Whoever doesn't make it, goes home."

"——!" he exploded, then laughed at himself. "I might have known you'd turn the trick on me.

"All right. But I've a trump left. I will leave you and Chullunder Ghose whenever Lhaten asks me to, and will go on alone with him, as he proposes. Once there, I will ask for admission for both of you. If they refuse, then I won't go in either, and we'll all three turn back."

I told him he would be a —— fool to refuse for any such reason.

"If they won't let me in," I argued, "I'll go back to the States and wait for you. If they turn you into something that's too wise for me to understand, I'll get my fun backing you, nevertheless.

"Besides," I said, "I've salted down some money and you haven't. Knowing something, as you will, you'll certainly be branded as a nut and you'll need all the support you can get—in addition to some one

big enough to punch the heads of your opponents.

"From what I've seen and heard," said I, "they'll teach you to abstain from violence, but they'll fill you full of stuff that will exude from you and start explosions wherever you go. You'll need some one who isn't a pacifist to break the heads of bigots. That's a job that suits me. And I'll help to keep the women from suing you in court when you refuse to accept them as soul-mates."

I could no more make him yield than he could make me, though I threatened to take him by main force, as soon as I should recover strength, and throw him into the Sham-bha-la ditch, to be fished out by the *chelas* as an act of charity. He promised to go forward. He refused to make the goal unless Chullunder Ghose and I might make it with him.

LHATEN kept coming and going, though I have not the remotest notion whence he came or whither he went at such regular intervals.

As a doctor he was almost a magician. He reminded me of a physician whom I once met at Baroda when bubonic plague was playing havoc in a camp of famine refugees. He was a man who had not graduated with distinction, and who had no professional prospects because he did his thinking for himself and doubted all the doctrinaires, but most of his patients recovered, whereas most of those whose luck submitted them to other ministrations died. The man had the healer's gift—and so had Lhaten.

He was silent, nearly always; but his silence was something like that of the redman, totally devoid of surliness, suggesting that he had so much to think about that talking was a waste of time. How he kept himself clean was a mystery.

At midday, when the sun would burn the skin of any one exposed to it, tea would freeze in the kettle within fifteen minutes after it was taken from the fire. Washing, consequently, was a questionable luxury and the Tibetans who occupied the portion of the hut that was cut off from ours by the partition were as filthy as might be expected. Lhaten even wore clean clothes, which usually smelt of sandal-wood. He only laughed when I asked him how he managed it.

Once, I believe, Rao Singh came, although I would not swear I was not dreaming. At that elevation, for reasons doubtless natural, but of whose nature I have not the remotest notion, dreams were as vivid and sharply etched as waking thought; so that it was difficult at times to draw the line between the dream and actuality. I can remember conversations that I thought I had with Grim, though he assured me afterward that I was sleeping and had not talked during sleep.

We both thought Rao Singh came into the hut, but we did not agree as to how he behaved, so it is possible that both of us were dreaming, though that both should have the same dream with mere minor variations as to detail seems unlikely.

Grim said that Rao Singh was wearing a turban. My version of it was a loose fur cap. We both agreed about his eyes, which were as blazing blue as when we saw him in the hermit's cave—and if there is anything in the theory that people don't dream color, that alone ought to settle the question. However, I am usually disbelieved when I assert that all my dreams are colored vividly, so I must leave the issue undecided.

As I recall it, no wind blew in through the door when it was opened and admitted Rao Singh. On the contraty, Grim declared there was the usual mid-morning gale and Lhaten had to force himself against the door to shut it. We were both sure there was snow on Rao Singh's coat, but differed about what boots he wore and as to whether he spoke to Lhaten in Tibetan or some other language. Grim thought he used Tibetan. I am nearly sure he spoke Hindi. What is certain is that Grim and I both understood him, or believe we did—which adds to the weight of evidence in favor of the dream, since we understand people in dreams without defining what language they use.

He said to Lhaten—Grim and I agreed about that:

"You should not waste energy. Too much is worse than too little. Exactly enough is the proper quantity."

Then he examined Chullunder Ghose, who had been more or less unconscious for ten days and was lying babbling in a sort of half-delirium, under sheepskins that he threw off constantly.

"Can't you reach him?" he asked.

"No," said Lhaten. "I could reach that other, but not him."

"You strive too strenuously, and you don't go deep enough," said Rao Singh. "What did you follow?"

"His affection for his friends."

"No use. It leaves off at the head. His heart is sound enough, but when the brain sees disadvantages the head prevails. His brain is full of terror. Calm that."

"I have tried, but he becomes afraid of me."

"He is dreaming of nothing but Dugpas. The whole universe seems full of evil to him. He has been badly poisoned. Get into his dream and let him see that what he fears is but the other side of what he loves. Make haste."

What Lhaten did then neither Grim nor I discovered, although we were almost exactly agreed, afterward, about the conversation, and we both saw Lhaten sit down by Chullunder Ghose's head. Thereafter, Rao Singh monopolized attention, striding over to us where we sat together on the yak-skin bench, our backs against the wall.

And that is another circumstance in favor of the dream theory. I may have been too weak to stand, but I can not imagine that Grim would have remained seated if he had been awake. Ordinary manners would have made him stand up. When we discussed it afterward, Grim was as sure as I that both of us remained exactly as we were.

Rao Singh stood still and looked at us, his penetrating blue eyes dwelling first on Grim's face, then on mine. He was not exactly awe-inspiring. He impressed one much too favorably for a sense of awe to creep into the feeling. One felt confidence in him, though it was impossible to understand him. There was no vanity about his dignity, no condemnation in his frown. When he spoke after several minutes, he began in the middle of a sentence, as if he had been talking to us since he came into the hut:

"—so you think it matters what is said of you, or what is done to you. But I tell you, nothing matters to you except what you think, and what you do to other people. If you expect praise for what you do and adulation in return for what you think, you may just as well give up thinking, because the world will only praise what pleases it, and will only tolerate what does not cause it the necessity to think. It stifles thought with ostracism and with bayonets, and then flatters itself how wise it is. How wise are you?"

He smiled, stood silent for a moment, and then went away and left us. Neither of us spoke. I dare say it was twenty minutes before Grim asked whether I remembered just what Rao Singh had said and we began comparing notes. It first occurred to us that it might have been a dream when we found that we did not agree as to the minor details. Even then we did not care to interrupt Lhaten, who was motionless in meditation near the *babu*. But when Lhaten moved at last and stood up Grim asked him whether Rao Singh had gone for good, or whether we might expect him again presently.

"From Rao Singh you will never know what to expect, except benovolence," he answered.

So I put the question bluntly—

"Was he here, or was he not here?"

He looked at me a moment rather keenly and then answered:

"Before you will ever know much about Rao Singh, you will have to learn not to discuss him. Not that it injures him in any way, but gossip is a rolling stone that runs down-hill. Many a man who was climbing up-hill has been hit by that stone and discouraged or else hurt. Some, who are nearer the bottom, where the stone has much more impetus, are crushed."

"Were we awake or asleep?" I asked.

"My back was turned," he answered. "Sleeping and waking are relative terms. Very few people indeed are awake at all until they die. Your friend Chullunder Ghose is feeling better."

CHAPTER XXIV

CHULLUNDER GHOSE

CHULLUNDER GHOSE recovered slowly and suffered more than we did from the altitude. But from the moment his consciousness fully returned, he seemed to have the same experience—of thinking, as it were, in high relief, with all the mental images appearing rounded and solid instead of flat and spectral. Plus was plus; minus was minus; there was no borderland of doubt between them.

Unexpectedly, he grieved over Narayan Singh, whom he had urged us not to bring on the expedition, and with whom he had never arrived on terms of intimacy.

"Sahibs, I was jealous of that Sikh. I loved him. He was a fighting fool, as sure to go off as a stick of dynamite. I was afraid of him. I hated his way of sitting by a fireside with that little hone and sharpening his saber. But I would give all I have to be able to wear such blinkers as he wore, and to have such firmity of purpose.

"Firmity of purpose—ah! To understand too much and see too much is my infirmity, since I see all around a thing. I see absurdities, where other men see only opportunities for valor. Sahibs, knowledge is a dreadful handicap. I envied that man Narayan Singh his blindness. He could not see the absurdity of things, and so he died a hero. But I fear me, I will die in bed, which is of all abominations the least tolerable, because it is the essence of expectedness and almost any fool can do it."

We remained three weeks in that stone hut on the grim, white, wind-swept shoulder of a mountain, eating food that Lhaten and his men provided from I don't know what source, and recovering strength slowly but without relapse.

Lhaten would not hear of our moving on before I was fit to make long marches, although he made no such stipulation as regarded Chullunder Ghose.

"For if our starting should depend on him, we might stay here a long time," he remarked as he eyed the *babu* rather sharply.

Chullunder Ghose, I thought, seemed disappointed by that decision. Announcement that Lhaten's men would carry him aroused no noticeable satisfaction. He was not ill-tempered, but he wore an air of martyrdom when Lhaten's men at last brought in the litter, and he was hoisted shoulder-high by four great smiling stalwarts who made nothing of the weight and only moved with greater dignity beneath it. He waved an almost tearful farewell to the hut

I walked beside him for a while, until the track grew narrow and too rough for anything but single file; and it occurred to me to ask him why he had shown such affection for the hut.

"I bade good-by to all romance!" he answered. "Sahib, we are going to where they will teach us the truth about all our illusions, and I have too few illusions as it is!"

He had some, nevertheless, though I am not quite sure what shape the most assertive of them took. At the end of three days' exhausting struggle with the wind, over a mountain trail that followed the line of a water-shed, we started to descend toward a river that we learned from Lhaten was the Tsang-po.

The following afternoon we entered a hermit's cave, about a hundred feet above the river that came thundering through an ice-encrusted gorge around a turn a mile away on our left hand, widened and shallowed in front of the cave—but flowed too rapidly to freeze except along the banks—and plunged over a cataract a mile below us. Over beyond the river was another range of mountains, snow-clad, and with no trail visible.

EITHER Chullunder Ghose imagined he could swim that river, or else he suffered from the equally ridiculous delusion that we would let him drown himself.

He climbed down to the water's edge by rough steps hewn in the rock, and the only reason why I followed him was that I wanted to study the rock formation where a buttress of the mountain jutted out into the stream. Suddenly Grim shouted from the cave-mouth—pointed—and I saw Chullunder Ghose struggling in the river as the ice-cold current swept him toward midstream.

There was nothing in sight that would float and I had to plunge in after him, cursing his bad manners, for the water chilled the very marrow in one's bones and, though it was no task to overhaul him it was desperate work to reach the rock-staked shore across that current. Ice froze in my hair as I swam, and I could hear the thunder of the cataract grow louder as I caught the *babu* by the neck of his cloak, pulled him over on his back, and tried to turn toward the bank.

It was impossible. The only chance we had was to go forward with the current in the hope of being thrown up on an ice-encrusted beach across the river; and we never could have reached that if two men had not put out from the farther side in a sort of coracle made of inflated skins, which they let out by a rope made fast to the shore and, paddling furiously, guided across our course. They hauled us into the unsteady craft and let it swing down-current by the rope until it struck the ice at the edge of the beach, where it bucked and swayed and we

had to jump toward ice strong enough to bear our united weight, whence we dragged the coracle, with the *babu* lying in the bottom of it, to the beach and safety.

Then we ran, dragging the *babu* with us, and lay breathless on a cave floor by a driftwood fire while four men stripped us naked and rubbed warmth into our bones. Another dried our clothing at the fire.

It was an hour before Grim and Lhaten came, since they had had to wait for another coracle to work its way across the river for them. And by that time it was dark. Grim said nothing, but sat down beside the fire, when he had noticed that I was not much worse for the experience. The Tibetans who had rescued us sat near him with the firelight on their faces, making them look like disembodied spirits framed in the flickering gloom. Lhaten paced to and fro with his hands behind him, paused after a while and, looking at the *babu*, said abruptly:

"So. Well, we have crossed the river."

That was the only comment any of us made. In less than half an hour, before supper was ready, Chullunder Ghose was in delirium and raging fever. Lhaten brought snow and packed him in it, alternating that with sheepskins, motioning the rest of us away, requesting silence and taking his place at last, cross-legged, near the *babu's* head. There he remained the whole night long, except that once or twice when I awoke, I heard him ordering one of those Tibetans who had rescued us to bring more ice. In the morning the fever was less and the *babu* was breathing easily but still unconscious. Lhaten told us we must march at once, but added, pointing at the *babu:*

"Don't question him. Don't speak of it. That sort of fear is like a sleeping snake. If you stir it, it strikes."

That day's march was the hardest of them all. The litter-bearers had to pass their load from hand to hand up naked cliffs where there was hardly foothold and the wind blew such a gale that sometimes there was nothing possible to do but cling with hand and toe to the projections and wait for a lull. There was a couloir where the sky looked like a patch of smooth glass resting on the summit of the walls and, as we climbed, infinity appeared to yawn beneath us. Once, between the ridges of a parallel escarpment, we passed through a tunnel of snow and ice, through which the sun shone as if through heaps of jewelry. And there was one descent, of a mile or more, on sheet-ice that we had to break for foothold. Lhaten led, pausing for nothing except to pay attention to Chullunder Ghose.

IT WAS sunset when we reached this cave, in which I am now writing. It is a long cave with two entrances that are very nearly at a right angle; and at the angle's apex, facing the cave's interior, there is the tall, carved image of a seated man, who rather resembles Rodin's "Thinker," except that his features are Asiatic and his figure like an Athenian's of the time of Pericles. He is carved from a block of marble that crops out from between retaining walls of porphyry. The rest of the cave is partly porphyry and partly limestone.

There, that night, we slept, dog-weary. In the morning Lhaten said that Grim should go with him, but said he did not know how long Grim was likely to be absent. He offered to leave two Tibetans, one to tend the fire and cook for us, the other to help me with Chullunder Ghose, adding that a messenger would come at intervals with food and medicine. So Grim and I restated the terms of our bargain, argued a little about it, and shook hands. I haven't seen him since he strode away across the snow, two paces behind Lhaten.

There is a sort of altar in the middle of the cave, half-marble and half-porphyry, as smooth as glass, except where broken, and the floor around it had been worn smooth by the tread of countless feet, although it does not seem to have been used for centuries.

I got upon the altar and sat there, after I had watched Grim vanish over the horizon, and for a while a sense of abject loneliness swept over me. The cave felt like a sepulcher. The cold and the wind moaning in through the double entrance added physical discomfort. I began to feel as if I were going mad. I even went to the cave-mouth with the thought of hurrying after Grim and calling him back to reconsider things but returned, determined to control myself by giving full attention to Chullunder Ghose.

He had no fever. He was lying in a sort of comatose condition, conscious, perfectly aware of me and of what had happened

recently, but apparently unwilling to speak. I felt inclined to kick and shake him to arouse his will, but remembered what Lhaten had said about fear. I did not want to kick him into kingdom come, or to terrify the reason out of him.

Lhaten had restored his physical condition. He was breathing naturally, and his pulse, if anything, was too quick. It was fear, it seemed to me, that had him by the brain and I wondered why Lhaten had not found some means to relieve it.

There was nothing else for me to do but occupy my mind with him, and I began to try to think of ways of stirring up his will, to make him think of something else than what obsessed him and begin to talk. For a while I sang—all the idiotic songs I could remember—even danced, clowning for him as I used to do for men in mining camps to get him in a reasonable humor. But though I grew warm with the effort and recovered something of my own equanimity, it was afternoon before I found the way to manage the *babu*.

I sat down where he could not see me, near his head, as Lhaten had done, and began to moan. I haven't cried for thirty years, but I can sob behind my hands like a Worthington pump with an overload and valves that need repacking. I can sound like a man with a broken heart and a cow with her throat cut, moaning in duet. I kept that up for fifteen minutes, until at last the *babu's* voice said very wearily:

"What is it, Rammy sahib? Are you also hopeless person?"

I pretended not to hear him and sobbed on, inserting a crescendo bar or two suggestive of hysteria. At last he sat up.

"Rammy sahib, let us make clean breast of miserable business!"

I SAT in shadow, so he could not see I was dry-eyed, and in another minute he himself was crying, the tears streaming down into the coarse black beard that had made him hardly recognizable.

"Rammy sahib, I am miserable *babu!*" he exclaimed. "Oh, would that I had died the way the Sikh did! I can not go forward. I will not submit to being made to see more clearly than I do. Yet, if I turn back I am self-confessed coward! Furthermore, how can I turn back? How shall I reach India alone, alive? As a corpse I would no longer interest myself. And if I should succeed in reaching India, I would despise myself, because you and Jimgrim treated me as fellow man and yet I failed you.

"On the other hand, if I go forward they will teach me the reality of things, of which already I know much too much! It has been bad enough as failed B. A., to stick my tongue into my cheek and flatter blind men—pompous Englishmen and supine Indians—for a living. I have had to eat dust from the wheels of what the politicians think is progress; and I have had to be polite when I was patronized by men whom I should pity if I had the heart to do it! And I could endure it, Rammy sahib, because I only knew more than was good for me and not all of it by any means!

I do not wish to know more. If I saw more clearly I would have to join the revolutionaries—who are worse than those they revolute against! It is already bad enough to have to toady to the snobs on top. To have to agree with the snobs underneath, who seek to level all men to a common meanness since they can not admire any sort of superiority—that would be living death! I would rather pretend to admire the Englishman whose snobbery exasperates me, than repeat the lies of Indians whose only object is to do dishonestly and badly but much more cleverly what the English do honestly and with all the stupidity of which they are capable!"

I suggested that wisdom, if that should prove to be the essence of Sham-bha-la's teaching, almost certainly would counterbalance revelation of the dismalness of things with knowledge of effective remedies.

"No, no!" he almost screamed. "No more! Wisdom only makes the heart ache. For a *babu* with a wife and children ignorance is the best condition. But you also were weeping, Rammy sahib. You must tell me why you wept."

I told him the plain truth about it. That I had pretended, in order to get him to talk. At that he threw himself down on the blankets in abject misery, beating the floor with his fists.

"Krishna! How I wish I had refused to come with you!" he shouted. "Then I only would have suffered from regret. But now what shall I do? *What shall I do?*"

I went and climbed back on the altar, and sat there until one of the Tibetans came and cooked our supper at a small fire over in the

farthest corner of the cave. I did not know what Grim would have to say to the determination that was forming in my mind and setting there as solidly as concrete. It was growing clear to me that I had neither right nor inclination either to compel Chullunder Ghose to go another yard with us or to desert him.

Yet I knew that Grim would not desert me. I was torn between unwillingness to rob Grim of his goal and obligation, as clear as daylight, to stand by a man who had done nothing to forfeit our friendship.

"I will take you back to India," I said at last. "I don't know how. We will have to ask Lhaten for guides and provisions. I will wait for Grim in India if we can persuade him not to come back with us."

During that night and the following day Chullunder Ghose spoke only at rare intervals. There was something he was turning over in his mind, but whenever he tried to speak of it he always checked himself and seemed to go back to his thinking. He was silent when, at sunset, a man came into the cave and handed me a note from Grim, scribbled in pencil on a leaf torn from a memorandum book.

All right; Jeff. Come forward. I am waiting in a guest-house and can see our destination from the window. I refused point-blank to go another yard without you, but I never was so keen on anything in all my life. However, the bearer of this, who is sombody, will doubtless do his best to scare both of you off the lot, so summon all your resolution, put the spurs into Chullunder Ghose, and come soon. J. G.

I READ the note by firelight and then looked up at the man who brought it to me. He was tall, straight, robed in yak-skin, bearded, neither a Tibetan nor a Rajput. He resembled Michael Angelo—or John Singer Sargent's painting of Moses. It was difficult to see him in the firelight.

"You may come," he said in sonorous English, "but neither may the bird return into the egg nor you resume your former ignorance. I warn you, stay away, if you have any hunger for the life you knew."

I answered that I had found the world quite good enough for me but Grim was much the best thing in it, so that if I should have to choose between losing Grim or all my other friends I must decide to go with Grim.

"But I've a friend here," I added, "who needs looking after and who prefers to turn back. Consequently, I must turn back. Will you kindly tell Grim—"

I paused, for I hardly knew what he should tell him. It was no use lying. I suspected he would not consent to take a lying message, anyhow. I asked a question:

"Was there something about willingness? Lhaten said—"

"Your own free will," he answered.

"Then will you kindly tell Grim I have been refused admission on the ground that I am not entirely willing. Say that I will wait for him in India, and that I hold him strictly to our bargain, the terms of which were, that we should all three try to enter and the devil take the hindermost."

"Pranam!" exclaimed Chullunder Ghose in Hindi. "This *babu* has come a long way, seeking—seeking."

"What have you sought?" asked he who stood beside me.

"Nameless one, my heart is seeking what this head denies!" He beat his head with both hands. "My heart is a lion. My head is a jackal. There are these two sahibs who have never stooped to be my fellow-men; they have never imagined me anything else. Not stooping, they have seen me as their equal. Shall I undeceive them?"

"Let the heart speak."

"Shall I show ingratitude?"

"Strip the heart bare."

"How shall I repay them?"

"He who asks repayment—nay, I tell you, he who will accept it, is a victim of illusion. That which has been given, is not given if the giver can retake it. He who looks for his reward receives the ashes of his own gift. As the sun sends forth his rays into the dark, thus only shall a man give, of his manhood. There is nothing else."

"Holy one, give me then, of your manhood!" said the *babu;* and the man beside me smiled as if he liked that answer.

"Can the jackal kill the lion?" he retorted. "Not until the lion is caught in a trap, when nonetheless the jackal fears to kill him, saying, 'Whence will come the carrion I preyed on?' The lion is the heart that hunts. The jackal is the head, that whimpers and yelps, and guzzles dead stuff that the lion leaves. What says your heart?"

"I am unwilling to betray these sahibs. I am the man they trusted."

"And the head?"

"I am afraid."

There was silence then for longer than a minute, while the *babu* sat swaying himself in agony of indecision. The firelight shone on beads of sweat that stood out on his forehead. Holding the wall to support himself, at last he stood up, standing very straightly for a man recovering from sickness.

"I am afraid," he said, "but I will face fear. I will go alone to India. I say, I will. If Ramsden sahib wishes to return with me, he shall not. I will not permit. For I will rather kill myself than keep him or Jimgrim from their goal. That is all. I will return alone to India."

He sat down and collapsed, laying his head on the rolled sheepskin that served for pillow.

"You shall return. Who said you shall return alone?" the man beside me asked.

"My head—my head. It aches!"

"Aye, aches because the heart has beaten it! Lhaten shall go with you to Darjiling. When your head says you have thrown away what you might have had, your heart shall answer: 'You have given.' For without you, your friends would have refused to enter; and yet with you they could not have entered, because none may come but of his own free will."

"Then good-by, Rammy sahib," said the *babu*, rather piteously, doing his best to sit up and to smile. He tried to hold his hand out, but collapsed again. I told him I would stay with him until he should be fit to travel, never mind how long that might be. And as I said that, another thought occurred to me.

"They must be secrets that are told where Grim and I are going—very well kept secrets. Will I ever be allowed to write about them, or to talk of them?" I asked.

"Then they would not be secrets," said the man beside me. "What is known in the heart can not be spoken by the lips. What you learn, you will live. What you think, you will do. There is no other way."

"But until then I am in no way pledged to secrecy?"

"In no way."

So I asked him for paper and pens and an ink-pot, which he sent by messenger in two days' time, together with a fat brass tube with caps at either end in which to pack my manuscript. And ever since, for nearly four weeks, while Chullunder Ghose recovered from his illness, I have sat here at the porphyry and marble altar, writing what I can remember of our journey.

He who brought the paper told me that Grim had gone forward as soon as he heard of how the *babu's* difficulty had been solved; so I suppose when I get there that Grim will be, as usual, a dozen or more jumps ahead of me in comprehension. But I would rather keep my eye on Grim's back than be neck-and-neck with any other dozen men I know.

It is one hour after dawn and wind is blowing like a whip-lash through the entrance of the cave. Chullunder Ghose is well, and ready for his journey. I will send this manuscript by his hand to Will Hancock at the mission near Darjiling. And if Will decides that it is fit to see the light of day in company with his books on the Pentateuch and what not else, he has my leave to publish it or to send it along to another friend of mine, who, having no board of trustees to censor his activities, may see fit to stand as its sponsor.

If he does so, he is warned that he will run risks, since a reputation for veracity depends on making such assertions as the public thinks are true. I can hardly expect him to believe what Rao Singh said:

"That it makes no difference what people think of you, or what they do to you. The only thing that matters to you is what you think, and what you do to others."

If he should by chance believe it, I can hardly hope that he will act on it; so probably this manuscript of mine will never see the light of day.

I have been warned that somebody will come for me this morning, and that I will have to go at once without keeping him waiting. I have given to Chullunder Ghose an order on my bankers that he seems to think not niggardly. He over-estimates the value of this manuscript, and is as proud as Lucifer to be entrusted with its delivery. He is standing beside me, waiting to insert this last page into the tube. He dislikes some of my quotations of his speeches, but has promised faithfully to deliver every sheet untampered with to Hancock.

Now I hear them coming—

THE END

Author of "South of Sarajevo," "The Bandit of Banyaluka," etc.

THE telephone rang.

It was a wall-type telephone, signal corps equipment, United States Army, hanging in the orderly room of the Nth Recruit Company, General Service Infantry, on the wall next to the door which led to the captain's office.

The heat of the torrid August day permeated the small room, despite wide-opened windows. The insistent jingle awoke the first sergeant who had been taking his afternoon nap with feet on the desk, reclining in his comfortable armchair.

The company clerk, at the desk opposite, had followed the top sergeant's example, but he had rested his head upon folded arms, leaning forward upon his desk.

The telephone was still ringing.

The first sergeant, now wide-awake, but without changing his position, yelled:

"Hey—Holt! Answer that phone!"

No answer from the slumbering clerk.

The first sergeant, taking his feet off the desk, seized the nearest object at hand—which happened to be a blue-bound book, called "Regulations of the United States Army, 1907, amended to 1913"—and fired it at the slumbering clerk. It hit the man squarely on the back of his head and made him jump up.

Rubbing a fast-appearing bump, he looked dazedly around, seemingly unable to understand this sudden attack, and then grumbled—

"Who the ——"

"I did," said the first sergeant. "Answer that telephone before I hit you with the inkwell."

The soldier turned, removed the receiver and said—

"Nth Recruit Company, Corporal Holt speaking."

On the other end of the line at post headquarters an irate sergeant-major who had been wondering what on earth had kept the Nth Recruit Company's orderly room from answering and had been on the point of sending the bugler, who did orderly duty, to find out, aired his anger as follows:

"What the —— is the matter with you fellows over there? I've got a bunch of rookies over here assigned to your company. Send a non-commissioned officer over to headquarters to get them. Make it snappy!"

"Awright," answered the clerk, and hung up the receiver. Then he turned to the first sergeant:

"They've got a bunch o' ringtails over at headquarters. Who will I send for 'em?"

"Send the N. C. O. in charge of quarters and tell the quartermaster-sergeant to get their equipment ready," replied the first sergeant.

The corporal departed upon his errand. A few minutes later ten newly enlisted recruits crossed the parade ground following an old non-commissioned officer, as so many sheep, the bell-wether. They carried large blue denim bags which contained their

belongings and such Government articles of issue as they had received from the quartermaster storehouse.

Their new uniforms, with tags still adhering to coat and breeches, and the ill-fitting leggings immediately proclaimed them to be civilians wearing the uniform of Uncle Sam. Their walk, bearing and attitude in general, in contrast to those of their leader, marked them as raw recruits—or ringtails, as old soldiers would call them.

They came up the steps clumsily to the porch of the barracks and there they dumped their bags. The sergeant in charge bade them to wait, entered the orderly room, after knocking and having been bidden to enter, and addressed the first sergeant:

"Ten of 'em, Sergeant, and about the crummiest bunch I've seen in a long while. Where d'you want them?"

"Take 'em into the hall, Sergeant. I'll read the bible to them," replied the top.

The sergeant in charge of quarters stuck his head out of the window and yelled:

"Hey, men! Leave your stuff outside and come into the hall. Wipe your feet before you come in!"

The recruits clumped inside, where the first sergeant awaited them. He bade them line up, and while they arranged themselves into a line-up of sorts, he eyed them keenly.

In his many years of service he had seen recruits come, had drilled them and had made soldiers out of them. He was a good judge of the material which came to fill the gaps left by men who were discharged from the service.

Not a bad lot at that. Sergeant Buckman had no eye at all. There was not one under five foot ten. Civilians, of course, but they would look different in a short while.

His eyes scrutinized each recruit separately. He looked at each man squarely, looked him in the eye. He had the satisfaction that not one looked away, each man met his gaze, unflinching. Then he addressed them:

"You men have already taken the oath of allegiance. You're now assigned to this company to get your preliminary training before you're sent to a line regiment. I see that you're all infantry recruits. That's a good branch of the service. Stick to it. I'm going to read you the articles of war and I want you to pay strict attention."

FROM the blue-bound book which, in its encounter with the back of the company clerk's head, had come to grief to the extent of a broken cover, he read the articles of war.

The sentence, "Shall suffer death", was repeated so often that the recruits began to wonder what it was all about. They felt vastly relieved when, after a while, the first sergeant closed the book and said:

"I am your first sergeant; my name is Dingly. When you speak to me you address me as Sergeant. Your squad leader is Sergeant Buckman, the sergeant who brought you here. He will show you to your bunks in the squad room. Get your bags and follow him upstairs."

The recruits gathered their bags and followed the old sergeant up the stairway into a large room, where many windows broke the monotony of the whitewashed walls. One was lined with green-painted steel lockers.

Two rows of iron bunks extended from one end of the room to the other. They were bare of bedding, and the recruits threw their bags upon the steel springs of the beds the sergeant had indicated.

In the center space of the room there stood curious-looking round pieces of furniture, which the recruits examined with interest. They had a large round base, with oblong-shaped grooves. From the base rose a wooden post, half a foot in diameter, carrying around its center a wooden ring with round dents equally spaced on the outer edge. An iron girdle was fastened around this ring.

"What's this?" inquired one of the recruits.

"That's a rifle rack," explained Sergeant Buckman. "I'll show you what it is for. Now come on down-stairs to the storeroom and draw your equipment."

In the basement they stopped before the room where the quartermaster-sergeant held forth. The door of the room was open, but a wide board had been placed across the opening waist-high, upon which the quartermaster-sergeant's helper had already laid the equipment for the first man.

There was a mattress, two sheets, a pillow and two pillow-cases, a leather belt with leather cartridge pouch, a bayonet in its leather scabbard and a rifle. There was also a tin tag-holder, containing a printed

tag, which showed a space for name, number of rifle and number of bayonet.

"What's your name?" asked the artificer as the first man stepped up to the door.

He entered the man's name upon the tag, repeated it with the number of rifle and bayonet to the quartermaster-sergeant and, with a short, "Take it away," called for the next man's name.

The issue of equipment was over in a few minutes. The recruits carried it to their bunks, where they found two blankets each awaiting them, also the company clerk who held a bunch of papers in his hand.

As soon as they had assembled, he called their names and then read to them the list of equipment they had just received. Then he said to the first man—

"Sign here!" Which the man did. The others followed suit, signing their names, without even asking what it was about.

Their squad leader then called them to one of the bunks:

"I am going to show you how to make up your bunks properly. Watch me closely, because I'm not going to show you again. The bunks will be made up every morning right after reveille and before breakfast. You're in the Army now. Remember that."

Upon the spring he placed the mattress, covered it with a sheet, tucking in the ends all around. Then he laid the other sheet on top and upon that one blanket, the brown letters U. S. in the center pointing upward to the head of the bed. The upper sheet and the blanket were tucked in under the foot end of the mattress, and the overhanging sides manipulated in a peculiar manner so that neat corners showed when the blanket was drawn in on all sides, save the head end. There the upper sheet was folded back over the blanket, so that a wide, white rim showed where the sides of it also found their way under the mattress. The other blanket was folded and placed under the pillow at the head end of the bed.

"Now get your rifles," ordered Sergeant Buckman, "and put them in here."

He unlocked the iron band of the gun rack and the recruits learned the purpose of the peculiar-looking thing which had been a mystery to them until now that it was filled with rifles and looked quite different.

They were assigned lockers, told how to arrange their belongings and when, after supper in a large mess hall, they returned to their barracks, they found that, so far, life in Uncle Sam's Army was not so unpleasant after all.

Then followed days of drill from morning until late in the afternoon. Soon their bearing changed and only the skilled observer could have told the wide gap that still existed between them and regulars, for after all, they were still recruits.

AN ORDERLY approached the tent which harbored Captain Jim Bagley, commanding E Company Hmtieth U. S. Infantry, stopped short six paces in front of the captain, who sat in a chair in the shade of his wall-tent, saluted and said all in one breath—

"Sir, the adjutant presents his compliments to the captain and requests his immediate presence at regimental headquarters."

The captain acknowledged the man's salute and then watched him face about and return across the dust-caked desert to the wooden shack which served as headquarters for an infantry regiment doing border patrol in the Big Bend region of Texas.

"Wonder what's up now," he mused. "I've got my orders to pull out tomorrow morning. Hope they changed their mind. This outfit of mine seems to get this tour of duty twice for every time another company is due for it."

At this he rose and, taking his campaign hat from a nail in the tent pole, followed the tracks of the orderly to headquarters.

There the adjutant awaited him in front of the screen door, a government telegram in his hand.

"Jim," he said, "your company's strength is fifty-seven men, isn't it?"

"Yeah," drawled the captain of E Company, "on paper. Let's see, six in confinement, seven in the hospital, five on furlough, three on special duty, ten A. W. O. L., that leaves me twenty-six for duty. Aggregate fifty-seven. Including all noncoms. And with that 'war strength' I've got to go out watching the Rio!"

"Well—I've got ten men for you," consoled the adjutant, "coming in on the 6:15 train."

"Where from?" inquired Captain Bagley.

"Northern recruit depot," replied the adjutant.

"Cripes—and then some," cried the captain. "Have I got to stand everything in this outfit? Why pick on me?"

"Because, Jim," laughed the adjutant, "because your company is undermanned and because you are the man to make soldiers out of them."

"Quit your kidding, you pie-faced mutt," growled Captain Bagley. "I'm in dead earnest. Do you expect me to go out there with a lot of green recruits in the company who don't know how to hold a gun, and less how to fire it?"

"They're not so green," the adjutant remarked.

"How come? You just said they were from a recruit depot. How much drill and how much guard duty have they had? Have they been on the range? Do they know—"

"Hey—not so fast." The adjutant stopped the flow of Captain Bagley's words. "One at a time. Their descriptive lists show that they've been at the recruit depot for twenty-seven days."

Captain Bagley buried his face in his hands, in mock desperation. Then he implored:

"What have I done to be punished like this? Why should my frail shoulders carry this tremendous weight? Why wish those ringtails on me? Why spoil the appearance of a perfectly good company of infantry by the addition of lanky, loose-jointed, dumb bean-eaters, that—"

"Because, Captain Bagley," a stentorian voice, coming out of the interior of headquarters interrupted him, "I have ordered the assignment of these recruits to your company."

Captain Bagley stiffened to attention. That was the Old Man's, the colonel's voice. His reply had lost the sarcastic sting with which he had plied the adjutant. His reply was very meek indeed.

"Yes, sir!" said Captain Bagley.

The look, however, which he gave the adjutant held a promise, and the adjutant, knowing Jim Bagley from the day they had entered West Point together, immediately began to meditate upon the possibility of ever being relieved from his duties and a subsequent return to the line.

Arriving at his tent, Captain Bagley resumed his seat in the shade of his tent. For a few minutes he sat in silence. Last night he had received orders to proceed, by marching to a point sixty miles south from the camp and to take up a position opposite the Rio Grande, from where he could watch the Mexican side. There had been several raids in the Big Bend region and the cavalry patrols had not been numerous enough to cover the enormous length of the river from El Paso to Brownsville.

Companies of infantry had been stationed at various points along the border, and while, so far, nothing had happened, one could never tell when another attempt would be made to raid a ranch and to get away with the horses. All the important fords were thus being guarded and at least a sense of comparative security installed in the hearts of the ranch owners who had written to Washington to their senators and congressmen.

It was E Company's turn to relieve the outpost now on duty. While his command numbered fifty-seven men on the morning report, there were only twenty-six men present for duty. This number was now to be increased by ten recruits, coming down from Fort Bliss.

"Well," he reflected, "it's up to little Jimmy once more to make soldiers out of rookies. They always get me to do this, and I'm not even hard-boiled. I'm soft, that's what!"

He slapped his thighs and rose.

His voice thundered into the direction of the sheltered tents his command had pitched.

"Sergeant Hannigan!"

The first sergeant of the company came up at double time. He knew that there was work to do when his captain's voice took on stentorian tones.

He stood erect before his commanding officer.

"Yes, sir!"

"At ease, Sergeant," said Captain Bagley. "Ten recruits have been assigned to E Company. They will arrive—that is, I think they will—on the evening train of the Southern Pacific. Better send Sergeant Kiefer to headquarters to bring them down here. Detail some of the older men to take care of them and show them how to make up their packs. The escort wagon will be here before nightfall. Sergeant, I forgot to tell you, we will leave at midnight so as to arrive early tomorrow morning at the river. Present my compliments to Lieutenant Harris as soon as he returns and tell him to call for me at Captain Sweeney's tent.

I'm going there now. I may be found there in case you need me."

"Very good, sir," said the first sergeant, saluting, and the soldiers went off in different directions.

By nightfall the new members of E Company were already acquainted with their new surroundings and the older enlisted men. They were in ranks, forming part of the last two squads, when at midnight the company marched southward, followed by a squeaking escort wagon.

All night they marched, under a purple, starlit sky, marching for fifty minutes and halting for ten, and covering the long sixty miles in about twelve hours, the small detachment—for a peace-strength infantry could hardly be called more than that—reached its objective shortly before noon the following day.

THE captain halted his men on top of a small rise, half a mile from the Rio Grande and, accompanied by his lieutenant, selected the camp site. It was near a spring in a deep-cut gulley which was wide enough to permit the pitching of shelter tents and deep and winding enough to prevent detection from either point of the compass.

As soon as the escort wagon and the mules had been taken care of, the cook with the help of a K. P. started his fire. The men had eaten nothing but a canned-beef sandwich and cold coffee. They were a tired lot, especially the ten recruits who, unused to marching, examined with rueful eyes the large blisters which adorned their feet.

Immediately after the noon meal the guards were detailed. The first twenty-four-hour guard consisted of the older men of the company, so that the remaining duty sergeant could instruct the recruits in the duties which would be theirs the following day.

Soldiering on the Border was a different matter than life in a recruit depot. True enough, they had instruction in interior guard duty, but what did they know of the routine along the Rio Grande, which was outpost duty. They listened eagerly to the sergeant, who did his level best to make them acquainted with various "do's" and "don'ts," but when his lecture was finished, and the various rehearsals had been concluded, the sergeant still had a vague feeling that all he had told them and shown them was still Greek to these ringtails.

He said as much to the first sergeant after supper.

"Give them some more instruction in the morning, Kiefer. You can't make soldiers out of them overnight. They don't look so dumb; they'll come on all right. If the skipper should ask you, say it'll be O. K."

"Well, Top," replied Kiefer, "if anything goes wrong, don't blame me."

Then came the morning, when sharp ammunition was issued to the new guard, when an anxious non-commissioned officer examined their rifles again and again, to see that the cut-off was set at "safe," since the rifles had been loaded with a clip. Like a mother hen, the sergeant hovered over his chicks until the captain examined them verbally and closely inspected their equipment. He seemed to be satisfied, for his face betrayed neither dismay nor approval, and he merely ordered the sergeant to relieve the guard on duty. After relieving the old guard, Sergeant Kiefer posted his men. They were, besides himself, one corporal, three older soldiers and his ten recruits. There were no reliefs, the men had to stand their tour for twenty-four hours, a tour of duty which consisted of watching the Mexican side of the river from a concealed position and of trying to stay awake. This latter part proved the more strenuous of the two.

Evening came. A glorious sunset spread a riot of colors across the western sky and with a short afterglow the red ball sank behind the Franklin Range. Then came the night. A slight breeze brushed through the sage and the greasewood and lifted tiny dust clouds over the prostrate bodies of men in khaki, whose eyes were straining to detect a movement across the river, to discover mounted peons. These were the things they had been told to look for.

The night was silent, save for the rustling of the sage and the lapping of tiny waves which rolled down to the Gulf of Mexico.

On the extreme right of the posted guards were two of the older soldiers.

"I'm going to take a nap now, Hank," said one of them. "You look out for the sergeant and wake me up when you hear him. You get your turn every two hours."

The man called Hank was conscious-stricken:

"Hey—you ain't supposed to sleep on

guard. Whatta you think I am. Don't do it, I tell you. You'll get in Dutch sure as ——."

But the other man laughed.

"What are you afraid of? There ain't going to be a thing to worry about. Keep your ears open and your eyes peeled. Give me a chance, will yuh? You'll get yours."

Hank consented.

"It ain't right, but I guess that's true. Nothing ever happens down here. Don't know why they send us here, anyhow."

But the other man did not hear him. He was fast asleep.

Across the river several large boulders formed a block of stone, rising to a height of a hundred feet and extending for four hundred feet parallel to the river. The stream at this point was about the same distance wide, shallow, and the current was sluggish.

Behind the boulders, concealed from the Americans, fifty Mexicans camped close to the rock. They had crept up to this spot immediately after sunset, leaving their horses in a draw, a quarter of a mile to their rear. Their approach could not have been observed by the soldiers, as they crept up singly, making a bee-line for the rocks. One of their number lay on top of the rock watching the Americans and noting their positions.

The sergeant had placed his men widely apart. They were in pairs, prone behind such shelter as the mesa afforded. Their uniforms made them inconspicuous enough, but the peaks of their campaign hats were easily distinguished by the silent watcher. The moon was high and even in the uncertain light the heels of the recruits could be plainly seen, sticking up high, for they did not know how to flatten out properly.

The Mexican descended from his perch. He approached his leader and reported:

"There are but fifteen, *mi capitan.* They are lying on the ground, but their sombreros can be seen. It will be easy to kill them like flies. Then we may go on to the hacienda of O'Neill and get those horses."

At a word from their commander, several peons crawled back to where the horses were hidden. They were to bring them up as soon as the firing would cease. That would mean that all Americans had been killed and the ford of the river could be passed without resistance.

Within a few minutes several Mexicans had climbed up on top of the rocks. Then desultory shots rang out.

The sleeping soldier on the right would never wake up again; neither would Hank. The sergeant, who had been crawling up to them, to see that they were on the alert, fell forward on his face, a bullet piercing his hat and his brain. Here and there another man lay still.

At the beginning of the shooting the recruits did not know what to make of it. They saw flashes from the rifles, but they waited to hear from the sergeant or the corporal. These men, however, as well as the more experienced soldiers, could never again tell them what to do.

The ringtails remembered, however, how to get back to the center of the position without getting up. They rolled, one after the other one, until nine of them lay side by side. One was missing.

They waited for him, looked for him. The firing had ceased. Then a groan, to the right of them, sent shivers up and down their spines.

It was the last of their number who rolled in, painfully and slowly, for his shoulder had been hit.

"Them's greasers, over there, shooting. They got me and killed the sergeant. Blaze away, you —— fools or they'll kill us all," he moaned.

On the Mexican side of the river fifty horsemen approached the ford. The eery light made their number appear larger.

A volley from nine rifles met them. Horses plunged, men fell, and as the recruits continued to pump their bolts and pull their triggers, firing at will without sight set, and thus, by chance and pure accident having the range, men pitched out of saddles, horses squealed in agony and curses rent the air.

But still they came on.

Then help came.

The firing had brought tired guards helter-skelter from their pup tents. They did not take time to dress. They had grabbed their rifles, and as they were, in underclothes, wrapped in blankets, they had run out of the gulley and into the mesa, flopping to the ground and firing into the mêlée. They did not have to be ordered by an astonished company commander or an equally flabbergasted lieutenant. They had known that something was happening and had acted accordingly.

When, however, a small remnant of Mexicans fled southward, a disturbed captain of infantry yelled "Cease firing!" until he was blue in the face and, when he had finally succeeded in arresting further shooting, hurried toward the river to find the guards posted there.

He came upon his recruits. They were jubilant. Had they not beaten off a raid?

"Who in —— did all this shooting?" the captain raged.

"We did," answered one of the men.

"Stand up when you are talking to me," yelled the captain.

Ten men arose, including the wounded one.

"Didn't the sergeant tell you that you were not to fire until Mexicans crossed to the American side and actually stood upon American soil?"

"No," said the spokesman.

"No what?" the captain demanded. Even in this moment he was the disciplinarian.

"No, sir!"

"That's better. Remember, this is watchful waiting—you've got to wait until you're killed before you are allowed to shoot back. Now where's the sergeant?"

"It's a fact, Anthony," Captain Bagley said to the adjutant a few days later when relating the incident, "we found Sergeant Kiefer shot through the head, four other men besides the corporal killed and one of the recruits shot through his shoulder. But the other nine, their first time in the field, their first guard, crowded together like sheep—blazing away for all their rifles could stand, battle sight, mind you, six hundred yards—just the range. They hit them, too, never having fired a rifle before in their blooming lives. Now what gets me is this: They never thought of calling for help, never showed a streak of yellow, just sticking, and they were up against at least fifty greasers."

"You did a lot of kicking a week ago, when I assigned them to your company," retorted the adjutant.

"In the first place, you idiot," said Captain Bagley, "you are suffering from enlarged head; get yourself a new hat—that Stetson is too small. The colonel assigned them, and he knew quite well to which company good soldiers ought to go!"

"Soldiers," gasped the adjutant, "I thought you kicked about getting recruits?"

"Yeah," said Captain Bagley, lighting a cigaret. "Recruits, raw recruits, the rawer the better. If they are all like these—give me the rawest who come in."

FILIAL PIETY

by F. R. Buckley

THE feudal system, under which eldest sons had everything to gain and nothing to lose by the deaths of their fathers, did not encourage the virtue of filial piety; in fact, it was a usual thing for old gentlemen who persisted in living to find stools set for them to trip over at the top of stone staircases; poison added to their cups of mulled wine; wild horses substituted for the palfreys on which they were to make tours of inspection; vipers placed in their beds, or bravos concealed behind their tapestries.

The son of Simon de Montfort, appearing in the most unfilial portion of the feudal period, is therefore quite a piquant, if not exactly a refreshing, figure. The king of England had caused the death of de Montfort *père*, and against this monarch the son conducted his revenge with the greatest punctilio; meeting the king's nephew before a cathedral altar in Italy, on the prince's return from the Holy Land, and butchering him on the altar steps.

As he was leaving the church, one of his companion noblemen, waiting outside, reminded him that, in addition to being killed, his father had been dragged about the streets of London by the hair of the head.

"True," said the younger de Montfort thoughtfully.

And, like the dutiful son he was, he instantly reentered the church, waved aside with his bloody sword the priests and noblemen clustered about the body of the murdered prince, seized the body by its hair and, unaided, dragged it out of the cathedral, through half the town, and deposited it in the public square.

The Shop on Junk Street

by R. E. HAMILTON

Author of "The House from the North Country."

THE city of Canton lay under oppressive heat. For two weeks the government troops had been withdrawing from the town, a hundred one day, two hundred the next. They marched in a long straggling file, carrying much impedimenta. Their uniforms were a musty gray, untailored, and their legs were bound with spiral leggings, clumsily, as a bale of cotton would be trussed. Some led horses which they would one day ride, and others, dogs which they would one day eat.

Sometimes they wrought havoc in the laboring life of the city. Hand trucks, drawn painfully by ropes, were wrenched from the grasp of coolies who toiled nearly naked under the sun, and commandeered to carry the provisions of the army. Sometimes a rickshaw coolie who looked aggressively healthy would be clutched by many hands and kidnaped into the ranks.

The hot dust of the bund was stirred constantly by tramping feet. Chinese ladies, riding uneasily in their chairs, covered their faces with handkerchiefs to shut out its choky thickness and begged the bearers:

"*Faiti, faiti.* Hasten, trouble is brewing."

The flag of Sun Yat Sen hung limp from the doors of the barracks, and along the streets hundreds of banners with painted characters were lifeless in the still air.

"Why is it so quiet, Ah Chee? Is a typhoon coming?" Harris MacInerney asked his number one boy.

"No, master. Too soon for typhoon season," said the boy. "Master go out?"

"It is too hot to work. I go into the city to buy tapestry."

"No, master. Please not go today; they say big fighting come."

"Fighting always come in China. I guess can hold off for two hours until master get back."

The number one boy wrung his hands and made squeaking noises, but MacInerney—known in South China as Harris Mack—picked up his sun helmet and stepped out into the glare. He walked across the foreign concession, waving to a few intrepid friends who battled on the tennis courts and dripped with sweat, and drew near the English Bridge which spanned the canal, the boundary of the Chinese city. A terrific din met his ears.

The bridge was of heavy masonry, broad and arched, always guarded by Sikhs. Besides the guards were usually to be found fruit and sweetmeat vendors squatting in the center, and a cluster of beggars crawling or limping about the Canton end. Today the beggars and vendors were swept aside and a horde of workmen were pounding with hammers until the heavens rang.

Harris Mack stood above them and saw that they were putting rivets into a pair of solid iron gates, half completed, which would bar the bridge. The men were making all haste and Harris Mack, inquiring of

a Sikh, learned this was the order of the consul-general.

Once over the bridge, he hurried down the back bund with its stark absence of shade and plunged into the narrow cañon of Shoe Street. He would purchase the tapestry—promised to his sister in America—and make all haste back to the concession. Inside the city the streets were cool and dim; the houses so close together that roofs of matting were stretched across from one house to another, and pedestrians walked and coolies trotted in the grateful shade. The tropic sun came through chinks in the covering as through slats of a half-drawn shutter and made patterns on the passers-by.

There was no activity in the shops. He strode past the hundreds of pairs of shoes, from those high-heeled and frivolous of pink and blue brocade to sober slippers of dark kid or felt. He passed the china shops, blue and white ware on shelf after shelf, countless covered bowls for drinking tea, and came at last to the impressive establishment of one Kwong Wing.

This shop, popular throughout the city, was in ordinary times hospitably open, but today the heavy doors were barred. Harris Mack set up a great pounding on the panels until an eye appeared from mysterious regions within and regarded him through a grated aperture the size of half a brick. The door opened gently but swiftly, wide enough to admit a person just the size of Harris Mack; a chain was lifted as he entered, and then both door and chain fell into place behind him.

Kwong Wing stood in his accustomed place behind the counter, but stood there alone. His henchmen, who ordinarily flanked him on either side, like candles beside an obese Buddha, were scattered about the shop emptying the shelves, folding embroideries and packing an immense bundle in the center of the floor.

Both friends bowed.

"*Mak sin shaang!*" said Kwong Wing.

"Kwong Wing, why all this trouble?" asked Harris Mack. "Will there be war?"

Kwong Wing shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can tell? I think maybe."

"Why do you think so?"

"I tell you. Listen on the street. You hear something?"

Harris Mack harkened intently.

"No, I do not hear a thing."

The Chinese nodded triumphantly.

"You see. Velly quiet. All over city, velly quiet. Every time all still, like this, that mean tlouble come. War, I think so."

"Always war. What is the matter with the government? Last fall it was the fight with the merchants and the burning of half the city."

"This time the Yunnanese, I think so."

"What are the Yunnanese doing?"

"The Yunnanese are the pay soldiers of Sun Yat Sen. What you call them? Mercenaries? Well, Sun Yat Sen have die, but here are still the soldiers he hire from the Yunnan province. They are here inside the city for long time now, and there are more Yunnan soldiers than soldiers of the government. They get too stlong. Sometimes they loot. Now they say, 'We are so powerful, we take the city, I think so.' And the Canton government soldiers, he can do nothing. So all the government soldiers have depart to acloss the river and mass together in one big attack."

"They will fire across the river?"

"Who can tell? I think so. Have velly big guns."

"Will the foreign concession be safe?"

"Oh, yes. Out of range of guns. Also Chinese soldiers velly solly to hit Blitish or Amelican gunboats. Too much tlouble happen then. But the city bad place to be in."

"I must hurry back then, Kwong Wing, but first I want a piece of Peking tapestry, very old and this color."

He drew from an envelope a piece of saffron silk shot with blue.

"No have got. I apologize. I show you what I have."

The helpers had just tied up the bundle on the floor into a great square of dirty muslin, but at the motion of the proprietor they unfastened the massive knots and pulled out the tapestries for inspection—hundreds of coats, mandarin skirts and innumerable separate pieces. Kwong Wing and Harris Mack searched through the collection, but there was nothing in the wanted shade.

"This color velly few," said Kwong Wing, admiring the sample.

The bundle was retied, slung on a pole and taken out of the shop to some place of safety known only to the owner and the three coolies who carried it.

"You know Junk Stleet?" asked Kwong Wing.

"I know of two Junk Streets."

"This is the one through Blackwood Stleet, beyond the Temple of the Five Hundled Genii. There I have velly good fliend, Chung Wing Fung. He have many stlange pieces for sale; vase, blass, tapestly. Maybe have got piece like this one."

"Thank you, Kwong Wing. I will go there chop-chop."

"You tell him you my fliend, I send you?" hinted the Chinese, mindful of his "squeeze."

"I will tell him."

The ponderous door was opened again, sufficiently to allow the body of Harris Mack to slide through and not an inch farther. The chain was lifted and fell behind him as the door swung back with a groan. Once more he was outside on the street, where people were hastening in silence.

HE BEGAN to notice the coolies for the first time—those men and women who, as they trot under their burdens, shout a singsong to ward off the spirits of fatigue and illness that follow in the wake of labor, and incidentally to keep in step when there are two of them at the same carrying pole. Today they were still as death, and he saw that the burden of many was money, done up in rolls and carried in plate-like baskets at either end of a pole, like the scales of Justice.

Other valuables were carried, too, and most were destined for the banks of Shameen, the foreign concession, where they would be safe. Each man was too intent on his own burden to rob his neighbor, and silver was carried boldly in the light of day.

Harris Mack emerged into a vacant, grassless space before the Temple of the Genii. He clattered over the uneven paving stones into Blackwood Street, where carpenters were whittling and carving furniture, and the unfinished wooden pieces lay about, reddish and fragrant.

Passages like labyrinths opened to confuse him, but by keeping straight ahead he found Junk Street at last, a lane of pigeonholes, innumerable small shops that displayed merchandise of all ages and values. He halted at last before a long narrow signboard whose black background bore the gold characters "Chung Wing Fung."

The building that glowered above the sign was a pawn-shop; he recognized it by its tall square tower with narrow slits of windows, impregnable to thieves. The door to the tower was shut fast and seemed so much a piece of the stonework of the walls that he could hardly tell when it began or ended. Such an air of silence surrounded the pawn-shop that it must be untenanted, but he found that a low curio store next door bore the characters of the same owner.

This shop was not barred. Square upon the street was a counter full of not too valuable jewelry and trinkets of all kinds—embroidered fan-holders, seals, necklaces of amber, necklaces of second-rate jade, necklaces of carved olive-pits, sandalwood-and-peacock-feather fans, snuff bottles, incense bottles, wine bottles, charms. Then came a passageway that turned at right angles, dim and lined with pictures made on unrolled scrolls.

A monkey-like aged man sat at the counter and watched Harris Mack stroll past him and down the passage with no more expression than if a cockroach had crawled along the floor. Harris Mack turned the elbow of the hallway and came into a room lighted with temple lamps, the most astonishing room he had ever seen.

In one corner sat a Buddha, ceiling high, of hollow bronze painted with gilt, which age had caused to peel in leprous spots. In the corner opposite sat the famous monkey god who had defied Buddha and leaped vainly across space. In the center was a pillar detached from the interior of a monastery. It was ornamented with gilded wood carved as fine as lace. The wood spiraled from top to base and formed a sort of separate sheath, and through the wide spirals appeared the inner pillar itself, which was neither of wood nor stone nor iron, but of gorgeous silk on which were embroidered flowers and cranes, waves and pagodas in gold or scarlet or peacock blue, like no pillar that ever was before.

And all around lay the implements of the gods—terrific spiked clubs, and carved fans three feet tall, all of hand-wrought brass polished so that they gleamed in the dark recesses of the room like tools of fire and sent back the reflections of the lanterns twentyfold.

Set back against the walls and placed on shelves were dozens of gold temple friezes such as glorify altars and monastery doors. Here gods and heroes in miniature fought or gambled or competed in tournaments.

Here archery contests between Lilliputian nations occurred, banners waved, horses galloped, scribes kept score, nobles pulled the long feathers of their head-dresses—the sign of high birth—and cheered lustily, and rival emperors beneath canopies watched the play.

All these things were the spoil of temples, the loot of soldiers, for the government of the republic fostered less reverence than had the Manchus, and generals sometimes permitted sacking when the pay-roll became an object of embarrassment. Consequently the Junk Streets were piled with pilferings that merchants had bought from the armies or from fences, and hoped to sell again.

Harris Mack was too dazed by the magnificence to distinguish at first the live occupants of the room who, in their dark *chams* and black skull-caps, appeared less significant than the deathless Buddha and the radiant little heroes. Then he perceived that all were standing, and courtesy required that he address one, a young man near the pillar, tall as a Mongolian, but slight.

"Can have look-see? Kwong Wing send me. Say you friend."

The young Chinese bowed.

"You are very welcome to my father's shop. We are pleased to make the acquaintance of an American."

Harris Mack burned dark red and could have cut off his tongue for the clumsy pidgin-English it had uttered. He bowed punctiliously and presented his card, which the Chinese read with interest.

"You are not afraid to leave open the door of your shop? On Tai San Kaai and on the streets where silver or embroideries are sold the houses are barred fast."

The shopkeeper shook his head.

"If the soldiers come they will come, whether there are bars or not."

"It would be a pity." Harris Mack gesticulated appreciation at the objects of art.

"Do not worry on our behalf. Our more valuable things are stored in the tower—" he indicated the pawn-shop next door—"and that they can never enter unless they shell it to the ground, for it was built long ago and is as old as the wall of Canton and the water-clock that used to stand in the Old City, and it is stronger than the buildings made today."

"Nevertheless, there are many things here that I fancy you would not care to have looted," said Harris Mack, looking over the strange splendor.

"These things are heavy, *Mak sin shaang*. I do not think the Yunnanese will loot unless they are beaten and fleeing the city. It is not their way; and if they flee they will not wish to be encumbered with, for instance, a bronze Buddha weighing two tons, or a temple bell like that yonder."

An iron bell frowned down on them, hanging from a massive rafter. It was clapperless, like the bells of the Orient, and so tremendous that to sound it a square timber, slung on ropes like a battering-ram, was required.

"And then," the Chinese went on, threading beads of blue Peking glass on a waxed cord and his voice running smooth as water, "I do not think the Yunnanese will do us harm, for two—" he glanced at his visitor and smiled—"no, for three reasons."

"May I ask what they are?"

The son of Chung Wing Fung threaded another blue bead and held it up to the lantern light.

"I think they will be first restrained by cupidity," he said slowly. "And if that does not stop them, perhaps they will yield to fear. And if fear fails, there is still one obstacle—superstition."

Harris Mack had intended to speak about the tapestry, but, feeling a faint rebuff because of the crypticness of the words, he walked instead to the back of the room and examined one of the gilded friezes. The other inhabitants of the shop, whom he took to be servants or assistants of the proprietor, had effaced themselves, but the son of Chung Wing Fung sat on a square bamboo stool and continued to thread his necklace.

The shadows became darker the farther the American penetrated into the room, and as his eyes were not yet adjusted from the white light of the streets, he groped and stumbled, until to his horror he fell upon the body of a man lying against the wall. He muttered an apology, but the figure made no response, and the ghastly thought came to him that he had trodden on a dead man.

The son of the proprietor rose and approached the wall, taking hold of a hand of the man Harris Mack had taken for dead. The prone person came to life, felt of the hand cautiously, then pressed it for a moment in both of his. The son of Chung

Wing Fung stroked him gently on the shoulder as one soothes a child, and returned to his bamboo stool.

"That is a cousin of our family," he explained to Harris Mack. "He is blind and almost deaf from a severe illness. Once a day a servant leads him about the street in the sunshine, but for the rest of the time he lies on the floor and dozes, raveling out the past. I am sorry he caused you to stumble."

"I was stupid; the light is dimmer than outside," apologized Harris Mack, and studied the man on the floor.

Like his cousin he was tall, taller than the average Cantonese, but unlike his relative his face was heavy and his bulk tremendous, although this last might be accounted for by the number of silk *chams* in which he was wrapped. He lay upon a bed board, and on this was also spread a *min toi* or quilt of a brocaded silk as handsome as the trappings in which he was wrapped.

"He wears very beautiful robes," remarked Harris Mack.

The son of Chung Wing Fung smiled.

"We humor him, *Mak sin shaang*. In former times he was a great wrestler. You can see how strong he has been. In those days he was in great demand in all the theaters over China and he has even performed in the Summer Palace before the revolution. At one time he defeated a famous wrestler from Japan—the Japanese, as you know, being renowned in that capacity. Then he was dressed in magnificent costumes as are all those connected with the theater. At last the sickness came upon him and he could no longer pursue his profession, but returned to his relatives to be cared for. Out of all his former glory we can still supply him with one thing in which he takes comfort: we carry a small stock of embroidered *chams* and mandarin coats, and those we do not sell we permit him to wear."

"I see."

Harris Mack regarded the man on the floor with renewed interest, but the one-time wrestler had rolled over with a fluttering of silk draperies, turned his unseeing eyes to the wall and appeared to sleep, so the American gave his attention to the younger man.

"You speak excellent English."

"I was educated at Columbia University, in your country."

"Really?" Harris Mack was startled. "What is your name?"

"Chung Lai Chow."

"Chung Lai Chow?"

The syllables had a familiar reverberation, and repeating them over to himself he realized that Chung Wing Fung also stirred recollections—something in the Chinese press, something governmental.

LIKE most foreigners in China, the American had concerned himself very little with internal politics, no more than for an occasional topic of conversation at the club or after dinner at his mess, where local reports, usually inaccurate and biased, were bandied briefly and forgotten. However, through the haze of gossip and argument he recalled at last the significance of the names: Chung Lai Chow, the young radical from abroad—this must be he; and Chung Wing Fung, the politician.

The Chungs were wealthy. They had been merchants for three hundred years and this shop with its adjoining pawn-tower was but one of a number that did business in Swatow and Wuchow, Amoy and Ku-liang. Some whispered that they were anti-government, potentially at least, and many attempts had been made to insinuate the doctrines of Chan Kwing Ming and other rival generals into the ears of the well-known family, and thus to coax the family treasury into alien pockets.

He recalled that the Yunnanese general was said to have made certain proposals—yes, so that was one reason why they did not fear the Yunnanese in this small shop, and scorned to bar the door. "I think they will first be restrained by their cupidity." Unreasonable to loot here and enrage the owners when there was a chance that the Chung thousands might be diverted to the cause of Yunnan!

Thunder rumbled faintly while he wandered among the curios, pursuing the favorite dream of the foreigner—the antique of impossible value. He had been correct then in his surmise of a storm. If it were not a typhoon it would be short, like tropical blows, and he would be safer here than on the streets, where a tile or a flower-pot might fall on him. There seemed no more indication of battle. In the tranquillity of the images and the temple lanterns war appeared fantastic, an absurdity dreamed of by sensation-loving Chinese and an overzealous consul.

The thunder moaned again while he fondled a pair of cloisonné cavalry stirrups, and later, as he bent to examine the pedestal of a green porcelain Goddess of Mercy, there came a crash so loud that he almost dropped the statue. For fifteen minutes there was a lull.

"Will you send a servant to the door to see whether the rain has stopped?" he asked the son of Chung Wing Fung.

One of the silent little men was dispatched through the crooked passage and returned presently to announce in Chinese—

"There is no rain."

"Then I will go back," said Harris Mack. "Perhaps there will be a skirmish after all and I will be more at ease on Shameen. You have a peaceful shop here, Chung Lai Chow, and one day when everything is quiet I will return, with your permission, to go over it more thoroughly. No doubt in that pawn-tower there are jewels for a king's ransom. If I should have the good fortune to be counted eventually as a friend it is possible that you would show them to me, *hai m hai?*"

The son of Chung Wing Fung laughed over his threading.

"It is not impossible, *Mak sin shaang.*"

"However, there is one thing I need today." He felt in his pocket and produced the envelope with the sample of saffron-colored silk. "Our friend Kwong Wing had none like it from his big assortment, but sent me to you in the hope—"

He was interrupted by that servant who had gone to the door to regard the weather and who now stood at hand, ready to receive the sample. The man had not uttered a word, but sucked in his breath sharply in one long sibilant gasp. The son of Chung Wing Fung stood stiffly erect and the blue beads fell from his lap and rolled away into the shadows. No one paid the slightest heed to Harris Mack, but all eyes in the room were fastened to something behind him, and the American wheeled sharply. The passageway was filled with Yunnanese soldiers.

They stood soundlessly in the opening, holding revolvers with long rifle-stocks, and both occupants and newcomers stared at each other for a moment without speech. Then a Yunnanese officer brushed past the men and approached the son of Chung Wing Fung.

"We wish to enter the tower," he said in broken but determined Cantonese.

"You can not enter the tower; I am sorry, but my father allows no one there in his absence. He is in Ku-liang and the keys are in his possession."

The officer made no reply but gave orders to the soldiers in the Yunnan dialect. They separated, one-half returning to the street where they circled the tower and hammered vainly on the pawn-shop door, trying to force the passageway or find another mode of entry. Those remaining inside the shop immediately began tearing down shelves, ripping tapestry from the walls and trying to push the Buddha, seeking an opening that connected with the building next door. In the confusion was the sound of porcelain smashed and trodden, of bronze falling and dented brass.

"It is useless," protested the son of Chung Wing Fung. "There is no connection between the pawn-shop tower and this house, although a common wall serves for both. Neither is it possible to break down the outer door of the tower, for it is of stone and iron, and as unassailable as a tomb. I beg that you will desist."

The Yunnanese turned on the Cantonese in a rage. He and his companions bore the lean appearance of mountaineers. His ill-fitting gray uniform was dusty and there were bullet-holes in his cap. Probably he was a former bandit, for his countenance was flooded with a ruthlessness that seemed to have been suppressed for many months.

"Do you know that there is a battle going on, and that two hundred have already been killed while we do nothing?" (That was my thunder-storm, fool that I am, thought Harris Mack.) "I have no time for argument. We must have the tower to use in military observations—"

"And for looting when you have made them," finished the Cantonese contemptuously. "It is well known that all Yunnanese are brigands."

"Watch for looting when the time is ripe. At present we require only the tower. It is impossible that your father has not left one duplicate key in your charge in case of emergency. We can make you answer."

"You can make me say only what I have said. I am Chung Lai Chow, and my father is Chung Wing Fung. Your general has had speech with us."

"I know you well," answered the mountaineer, "and if your name were pig it would

would have no more effect. In another day the city will be ours, and it will be no longer a case of your lending money to the Yunnanese, but of the Yunnanese taking it if they wish."

"So much for cupidity," said Harris Mack to himself. "We will presently see the fate of fear and superstition."

The officer was giving orders to his men, who promptly carried in the monkey-like little man from the outer counter, no longer inscrutable but agape with terror.

They stood him erect and two men held the vicious wooden-stocked revolvers at his chest.

"Where are the keys to the tower?" demanded the officer. "You appear to be a coward, and therefore will speak before your master."

"*M chi*," said the assistant shopkeeper miserably.

"He knows nothing," repeated the son of Chung Wing Fung, "but even if he were wise as Confucius he could only say what I have told you. There is but one key to the tower and that in the possession of my father."

"Shoot the servant," said the officer. "A little pain may give speed to his tongue."

"*M chi*," wailed the servant, "*m chi, m*—"

He fell from a bullet in the chest, and lay like a sacrifice before the great statue of the monkey god, whom he so well resembled.

The officer leaned and shook the prostrate one by the shoulder.

"Now will you answer, Cantonese dog?"

"He will never answer in this world," said the son of Chung Wing Fung. "Already he begins the ascent of the Dragon."

"Well are the Yunnanese named barbarians," came an expressionless voice from the living apartments of the shop, "when even defenseless servants, occupied in the discharge of their duties, are murdered by them."

DIRECTLY opposite the crooked passageway, from behind a half-drawn curtain where Harris Mack had previously glimpsed tall pots of lotus, emerged a man of fifty years. His hair was white, and long white mustaches hung like tendrils to his chin. His round, pinkish face was more placid than the moon. His satin trousers were bound at the ankle, and except for his black mandarin's cap and his waist-long "overcoat" of black broadcloth he was dressed entirely in plum-colored brocade.

Harris Mack recognized him immediately from pictures that had appeared in the vernacular and the English press.

"Dr. Sin Fook Chong," he cried.

The doctor bowed.

"Sin Fook Chong," echoed the Yunnanese soldiers, and even the officer seemed astonished.

"Dr. Sin Fook Chong from Peking," explained the son of Chung Wing Fung.

Harris Mack stared longer than etiquette permitted. Here indeed was adventure this afternoon, for this was the famous "man of many affairs," not only counselor of the dead Sun Yat Sen, but reputed "restraining hand" to that great Christian general of the North—Feng, the outwitter of Wu Pei Fu—and even friend to Chang Tso Lin, the war lord of Manchuria. Foreigners knew him as the "key-ring," for by his diplomacy he united as well as could be united now the three keys, South China, the Central Government at Peking, and Manchuria, yet like the Chung family threw his lot with none.

Why was he in Canton? Had Harris stumbled upon a political conspiracy?

The doctor marched forward with relentless steps and fixed a calm eye upon the officer.

"You enter by force the home of my kinsman. You wilfully murder an innocent and faithful servant. You tear down tapestry and destroy merchandise and porcelain images. You prepare to break into the tower where are kept the treasures of this family's fortune. Leave this shop, taking your soldiers with you. Warn your brother officers that this place must be immune to their violence, or disaster will fall upon them and you. Remember that these Cantonese whom you are fighting dread the Yunnanese in some measure, but there is one thing they dread ten thousand times more, and that is the army of the Central Government of Peking. Moreover, the Central Government is nothing loath to send its regiments to South China, being in no pleasant frame of mind after the refusal of Canton to turn in the customs revenue last autumn. Shall I then advise my friend Feng, the Christian general, that now is the fitting time to send fifty thousand troops to the Canton government and trample like caterpillars the Yunnanese upstarts?"

"Three cheers!" said Harris Mack silently. "I like this old bird and his oratory."

He turned to the soldiers of Yunnan, expecting them to be bowed like wheat by the blast. Innocent as he was, he himself had shivered with vicarious guilt and trepidation. Unfortunately, however, the malediction had been uttered in Cantonese, of which the majority of the group understood no word, the officer alone catching the full drift, and he a man not easily swayed.

Nevertheless, in deference to Dr. Sin Fook Chong, a superior officer was sent for, and while shells burst and machine-guns rattled incessantly in the distance, a parley took place in the dusty shop on Junk Street.

The blind man moaned in his corner, sensing in the remote world of his own, where no lights and few sounds penetrated, that something was wrong. The vibrations of the guns quivered in his half-useless ear-drums and he called in anguish for the son of Chung Wing Fung. The young man soothed him and the moans died away into resignation.

The two officers ended their conclave and the superior returned to the station assigned him for the battle.

"Owing to the high rank of your family," said the officer who had first appeared, "and to the presence of the distinguished guest, we will not lay violent hands on you unless you resist. It may be that you speak the truth and there is no key in your possession. Nevertheless we will make our way to the tower by force."

"Remember the Christian general and the unbeaten armies of the north," intoned the doctor, like the slow voice of judgment.

"We are mountaineers," replied the Yunnanese. "We do not fear these so-much-boasted soldiers of the Central Government. They may not be so eager to embark for Canton as you say, and if they come they will be a long time on the way. We will have warning and depart to our own province where they can never find us, for we will separate and take devious routes to strongholds known only to ourselves. There will be no more argument; we have wasted too much time already."

"So much for fear," thought Harris Mack. "There is only superstition left, and he has not yet put in an appearance."

He looked vainly around the room, seeking some device which would put unknown terror into the hearts of the enemy.

"Perhaps old Buddha will do his stuff," he said, appealing to the high statue.

But the god continued to squat in motionless meditation.

Meanwhile the room filled with a further surge of soldiers, and iron bars, pickaxes and shovels were carried in. The son of Chung Wing Fung assisted the blind cousin to a sheltered nook on the other side of the room from the connecting wall where the opening would be forced.

The servants fled like mice, and the body of the dead man was kicked aside like a sack. A crash in the entrance told that the counter in the front of the store had already been forced and its contents pilfered, which augured ill for the treasures of the tower. The base of the connecting wall was assailed by iron bars, and even the heavy timber used to sound the temple bell was unfastened from its ropes and converted into a battering ram.

Only Dr. Sin was unmoved. He stood rooted like a tree in the center of the room, near the pillar of the one-time temple, and stood aside for no man, so that soldiers in their operations were forced to circle around his ample bulk.

"He doesn't look as if he had ever been disobeyed before," said Harris Mack to himself. "I hope the old fellow doesn't try to interfere with these scoundrels. All their guns in action at once would make an awful mess of this place."

One Yunnanese had climbed a ladder and was pounding the wall as he ascended, trying to find a place that was not as solid as the base, against which the pickaxes and battering-ram were making no impression. At last, at the top of his ladder, he cried out to his officer, indicating that the partition grew thinner.

"Stand back," ordered the officer. "We will blast that place with dynamite."

The son of Chung Wing Fung exclaimed in wrath and protest. The doctor reached out and seized the Yunnan officer by the throat, a move so utterly implausible and unforeseen that the latter was thrown off his guard and dropped his gun upon the floor. Both Harris Mack and the son of Chung Wing Fung had been horrified by this disastrous move on the part of the old gentleman, and, as the soldiers rushed forward, exclaimed in unison—

"Do not harm him."

There had lurked in the back of Harris Mack's mind, during the whole episode of the Yunnanese, the warning that he would be much better off if he left this scene. It was not impossible to venture into the streets, for the active shooting was probably from one side of the river to the other, and by keeping to the back of thoroughfares he could dodge the rifle fire and take his chances with shells, so reaching the safety of Shameen.

But on the other hand a sense of loyalty to his new acquaintances had persuaded him to remain to the end of the performance, and also a less altruistic hankering for adventure. He had intended to make no move that would embroil him in the entanglement, but as he saw the dignified Dr. Chung go down beneath a swarm of gray-clad figures, the last vestiges of neutrality dissolved and, searching vainly for a better weapon, at last he picked up one of the brass clubs of the gods, ravished from a temple, and rushed into the fray.

The effect of his entrance was instantaneous. Several soldiers drew back from the struggle, not because of inferior arms, but because they had had no dealings with foreigners before and were not sure they liked the idea. Who could tell what a foreign devil would do?

"Do not touch the American," shouted the son of Chung Wing Fung. "You know the disaster that follows the harming of a *sai yan*. It is like profaning a malignant god. Wherever one falls, there fall ten Chinese. Gunboats bigger than mountains pursue the slayer, spitting fire like twenty dragons."

"Oho," said Harris Mack. "So I am Superstition!" and fought on for the rescue of the doctor.

The Yunnanese officer, very red in the face from rage and from being choked, had recovered his gun from the earth floor.

"I fear no devils, either Chinese or foreign," he said, and, standing five feet from Harris Mack, fired pointblank at his head.

FOR Harris Mack there followed chaos, which gave place to blackness without sound. Infinity passed. Then at the dawning of a new universe it seemed as if the blackness were interspersed with slow shots of light, as if some one opened and closed a shutter. As every shot of light was accompanied by ringing pain and the unpleasing sensation of some one feeding him, he tried to crawl back into the acheless dark, and succeeded for a time. At last, however, he could put away the light no longer, and opened his eyes.

The first thing he saw was a lotus of enormous beauty growing out of a porcelain pot, and he thought he must have died and gone to the Chinese heaven with the other inhabitants of the shop on Junk Street. Then he was conscious of being sopping wet about his face and head, and of small exclamations of pleasure, like the chirrups of a happy bird, in his ear.

Turning his head he gazed at the delicate, perfectly oval face of a Chinese girl, her hair braided and coiled in a wheel, with buds the color of yellow cream tucked into it. She lowered her eyes as he looked at her, and called to some one in Mandarin.

The face of the son of Chung Wing Fung appeared out of whirling depths and swam toward the American.

"Are we all dead?" asked Harris Mack wearily.

"No, *Mak sin shaang*, but you very nearly accompanied the poor servant in the ascent of the Dragon."

"I admit it," said Harris Mack, mindful of the pangs and the darkness.

"I wish to introduce my wife. She is from Peking and speaks only Mandarin. She is sorry that she can not converse with you."

The young wife gave a fluttering bow and withdrew, taking with her a wet cloth and a basin. A servant came bringing a bowl of soup, and Harris Mack sat up to drink it, but was pushed gently back by the son of Chung Wing Fung, who fed the patient himself, an arm around his shoulders.

"You are very weak; you do not realize it," he said. "Do you know that you have lain here for six days? Feel, here is where the bullet went."

He took Harris Mack's fingers in his hand and faintly brushed them along a deep, wet furrow in his head.

Another face swam into view as the room cleared of mists. The doctor sat immovable on a carved blackwood chair, his dignity unmarred even by bluish bruises along his jaw.

"The doctor is the uncle and guardian of my wife, and has honored us with a visit."

"He also escaped!"

"Happily, yes. When you were wounded attention was directed from him and we were able to drag him here. Afterward the Yunnanese occupied themselves in blowing up a section of the wall and entering the tower, and have not since been concerned with us. No doubt they believe you dead."

"Are they still here?"

"Yes. They can be heard in the next room."

Harris Mack realized then that he was still in the shop on Junk Street. Beneath the curtain he could see the gray legs of soldiers moving, and occasionally footsteps were heard ascending a ladder and voices shouted down reports.

"How is the battle going?" asked Harris Mack, trying to distract his mind from the pain in his head.

"None of us have been out in the street since the day you came. The battle is still from one side of the river to the other and shells occasionally fall on the houses near by."

"Have they looted the treasure of the tower?"

The son of Chung Wing Fung sighed.

"We fear the house of Chung is ruined, *sin shaang*. They have not yet been observed departing with any of our goods, being occupied chiefly with military affairs. Only a few are in the tower, which is used as a lookout station. But who can tell when they will leave, these soldiers, and with them will surely go the wealth of my fathers. It was not as I supposed when I brazenly reassured your solicitation. Neither cupidity nor fear nor superstiton could restrain them. We are bowed with misfortune."

The doctor interrupted mildly, his hands curved over the black dragon talons that formed the arms of the chair.

"Notwithstanding, we have all been spared our lives. And if we lose a part of our wealth, we have gained a friend."

"True," said the young Chinese with gratitude.

Harris Mack fell back into a doze, while the pain in his skull lessened little by little.

He woke to hear the blind man, whom he had forgotten, moaning softly and pulling his cumbersome bulk from the pallet. Having risen he groped his way about the room like a restless dog.

"*Ho p'a, ho p'a,*" he whined.

He dragged his *min toi* behind him and, resisting efforts to restrain him, pushed aside the curtain and entered the shop where the soldiers were in possession, on his way to lie down in his familiar niche.

"He has been uneasy since the battle began," explained the son of Chung Wing Fung. "He repeats all day that he is afraid. Then indeed we realize that we are not yet safe. It may be that a shell will fall upon this house, or that the soldiers of Yunnan will not be content with robbing, but will murder."

"Are you not afraid that he is in danger in the outer room?"

"He refuses to remain with us, being used to the shop. But why should they kill him, harmless to none of them?"

Outside in the direction of the river the firing was continuous. The three men and the woman sat motionless, listening and occasionally commenting.

"Yesterday a shell fell into the street ten paces from my door," said the son of Chung Wing Fung. "Three were killed."

"The Yunnanese have the superior force," said the doctor. "But they have no boats to cross the river, neither have they much heavy ammunition. They have sunk a small gunboat, according to report, but the great flagship of Sun Yat Sen is unharmed and inflicts heavy damage."

"*Ai!*" cried the young wife in sudden distress. "*Ai!*" and hid her face.

A new crash came from the left, followed at once by machine-guns so close that all crouched instinctively upon the floor.

"No longer are they fighting across the river," remarked the doctor. "This is a flank attack. The Cantonese division that had been recalled from the hills must have arrived. Now is the crisis."

Running footsteps in the other room could be heard. The son of Chung Wing Fung supported Harris Mack, and all four crept to the thin curtain through the mesh of which they could see what happened in the shop.

High in the wall connecting with the tower a hole four feet wide had been blasted, revealing a stone staircase. A ladder led from the floor of the shop to the hole and great chunks of masonry lay about among the brass fans and the gilded friezes, some of which were broken. The pillar of embroidery had been knocked over on its side. Two soldiers had run into the street to find the reason for the new bombardment; the rest—fifteen perhaps—were

waiting for orders. The officer was not in sight.

A moment passed while the bombardment continued, and then two Yunnan soldiers stood in the street doorway carrying a machine-gun, while at the same time the officer appeared above, at the hole in the wall. Commands and reports were shouted, and the gun-bearers sped off, taking with them the fifteen men.

"I am not conversant in the dialect of Yunnan," remarked the doctor, "but it is clear all reinforcements available are being summoned."

The shop was now empty of all but the blind man, but in the tower overhead the officer, apparently in company with two or three men, continued in his observations.

Harris Mack leaned against the door jamb in pain and dizziness, but insisted on keeping to his post.

"If I had a gun I would climb that ladder and take my chances with the Yunnanese again, all for the sake of seeing the battle," he declared with regret.

The machine-guns rattled ceaselessly; Harris Mack kept his knowledge to himself, since the others said nothing, but he knew that little by little they came nearer. The wife fluttered through the curtain and knelt before the Buddha, repeating with passion fragments of the Buddhist Mass. The shock of a shell knocked the green Goddess of Mercy from her shelf and she flew into a spray of pieces. Then the firing stopped.

Down the stone stairs pounded a Yunnanese soldier. He crawled through the hole and descended the ladder, his uniform bulging with loot, and over his shoulder hanging a scarlet Canton shawl filled with treasure. He was closely followed by the officer, likewise laden. The little wife fled from the Buddha to her husband.

"Alas for the treasure of my family!" groaned the son of Chung Wing Fung.

"They have seen from their lofty perch that the Cantonese are victorious, and they are fleeing the city," said the doctor.

At the foot of the ladder the first soldier paused, intrigued by a splash of gold. It was the blind man wrapped in *chams*, lying in his retreat against the wall. The soldier dropped his sack and pulled at the invalid's splendid outer coat, black satin embroidered with a hundred golden peacocks. The fastening of the *cham* broke, revealing inside another, more dazzling still, of saffron-colored tapestry woven in repeated patterns with threads of electric blue. The officer, also seeing this, cried out with pleasure and laid rough hands on the outer coat to tear it away.

The blind man had shown no anxiety at first, thinking at the touch that it was his young relative come as usual to comfort him, but at the rough treatment he reached out trembling fingers to feel the hands of his tormentors and determine their identity. They were strange hands that held him, and he screamed in fear.

The soldier at the left sleeve and the officer at the right pulled off the black-and-gold coat, and began to unfasten that of saffron. The blind man protested, and held it tighter around him.

"Surely they will not shoot him!" cried the doctor. "Ah, the brigands!"

"He is getting angry," whispered the son of Chung Wing Fung. "My poor cousin. I have never seen him angered since his illness."

Indeed, the blind man was losing his gentleness, and if the yellow *cham* was not falling away from him, his fear was being shed like a cloak. His refusals became shrill as he was dragged upright. They were taking away his well-beloved trappings, the symbols of his lost fame.

His fingers hooked, and his face that had been smoothed with the gentle vacuity of the blind became distorted. He planted his legs sturdily apart, like supports to a tower. One arm shot out to the unknown tormentor at his left and wound like an octopus around him, pinning his arms to his side. Muscles the blind man had never hoped to use again swelled and filled him with forgotten exultation. With his great left arm he hugged the helpless one to his side still more tightly.

"My ——," muttered Harris Mack, "those weren't clothes that made him huge. They were sinews. What a man! A monster!"

The monster's right hand seized the Yunnan officer, and before the soldier could draw his gun had traveled with lightning speed from neck to leg. He grasped an ankle, upsetting the mountaineer. Then, disregarding the struggling private hooked in his left arm, he gave a heave. The officer screamed and his light body left the ground, held by one ankle, described an arc through the air and crashed uglily against the bronze

image of the monkey god. The useless gun slid softly to the floor.

"Ugh!" Harris Mack turned his head from the bleeding statue. "A broken skull. The monkey avenges his own."

He would not look upon the fate of the Yunnanese private, but the son of Chung Wing Fung, unperturbed by horror, kept him informed.

"See, he grasps him in both hands, bending him over far. How he cries! How my cousin grunts. There, he has broken his back. *Eee-yah*, my brave cousin. What, still more soldiers are coming?"

Two last men, encumbered with the goods of the tower, hung suspended upon the ladder, amazed at the proceedings. The son of Chung Wing Fung rushed forward and snatched up the gun of the dead officer.

"Come down," he ordered.

Either they were dazed or too impeded by the loot to draw their guns, for they obeyed him.

"Let fall what you have stolen."

While the burdens fell to the ground the Cantonese searched them energetically. Then he let the men go and they fled into the sunshine.

OUTSIDE now not even a lone rifle nor a shout broke the stillness, and within was only the tiny thud of blood drops falling from the statue of the monkey god.

"The war is over," said the doctor.

Harris Mack realized that he was filled with pain and nausea.

"Send a servant for a coolie-chair," he requested. "It is long past time that I went home."

Two servants went reluctantly to the streets and returned with what celerity they could, followed by two bearers. The coolies were ordered into the shop itself so that the American could be lifted to his seat. He began his good-bys.

"Wait, *Mak sin shaang*," said the son of Chung Wing Fung, and picked a once white envelope from the floor where for six days it had been trodden by the feet of soldiers.

From inside the flap he drew a sample of saffron silk shot with blue.

"It was for tapestry in the color that you came to my father's shop?"

"Yes, but—"

"Will you find a mandarin coat acceptable?"

"Not the blind man's," the American yelled in panic, his nerves on edge.

The Chinese laughed and brought another coat from behind the curtain.

"Yellow or blue or red as a village burning at night," he said, "they are all alike to him."

He removed the saffron robe with the repeated patterns in blue, and placed about the blind man's shoulders one of duller color.

"Take the yellow coat as a gift," he said. "We are indebted to you ten thousand times its worth."

The cousin, gentle under the hands of his protector, satisfied himself that the dark robe was silk, and put his hands promptly into the sleeves.

"I am happy to have a new garment," was his only comment.

"Farewell, *Mak sin shaang*," said the doctor. "Come to Peking one day and visit in my house. But now let the bearers hasten back to the Concession. You should have no trouble going through the streets."

"Have the Yunnanese fled, then?"

"Those that have not are being beaten and pushed into the river with poles, or crucified along the bund; so the servants report. Alas, one faction is as bad as the other in these wicked times. It is wise to take no sides—remember that, *sin shaang*—but to remain neutral in the example of the Chungs and the Sins."

The doctor bowed, the son of Chung Wing Fung bowed, and the charming wife from Peking inclined her head gravely.

As the chair was borne into the crooked passage, Harris Mack saw the blind man move to the wall, gather his *min toi* about him and lie down upon his bed board.

The King of the Black Water

by GORDON MacCREAGH

A Complete Novelette

Author of "The Jest of the Jungle," "The Creek of the Poisonous Mist," etc.

BY ALL means, Senhor Consul, I will tell you of your compatriot, that red-head Americano, whom we of the upper rivers call the "Peloroxo." Not that there is any need, let me assure you, of your good offer of intervention with that governor fellow on his behalf. You are but newly appointed here in Manaos City; otherwise you would know that I, Theophilo of the Upper Rivers, and that crazy compatriot of yours, we do not look for protection from those politicians.

What? You have heard already? Oho, the city remembers us then? And that was two seasons ago. Well, in the cities, of course, nothing ever happens; so that little events stand out the more clearly.

I will tell you the truth then. I make free admission from the outset that we made a stupid mistake. What we should have done was simply to throw those fellows overboard and let the caimans get them; the whole gang of them, Dom Sylvestra included. I, indeed, was in favor of it. I said:

"Look, these bandits have tried to steal our whole shipload of tagua and have led us a chase over the half of Amazonas to recover it. And now that we have overtaken them, what then? We have our cargo of ivory nuts, which was ours from the beginning. But is there no penalty for our loss of time and of money and of men? What will it avail us to turn these tripes over to the law and to have them thrown into the *calabouço* for a year or so? There is no nourishment to our business in that. Besides, process of law is not for us of the upper rivers, who make our own law. No, let us heave them over as a warning to the rest of those would-be pirates; and the rivers will be well rid of them."

But the Red-Head said no. He is more set in his ideas than a peccary boar, is that compatriot of yours. Look now, senhor; this is my observation of beasts as well as of men. Take a jaguar cub of the jungle and train it to live with men. It will adapt itself to circumstance and will be to all appearance a cat; yet hidden in its fiery soul the ineradicable jaguar will persist. So with this Peloroxo. Perhaps you have met others like him.

His cubhood was spent in some curious community in the center of your country where it seems they hold ideas the same as those of their great-grandfathers and are one and all stuffed with the belief that such is the way to live, and none other. He came to us and survived by his luck alone through a period of preaching to us his religion—which was how much better his townlet was than all others. Yet he lived; and presently he learned that there existed whole men also outside of "God's country"; and he grew to become, as you have heard, Peloroxo of the Upper Rivers, worthy to be the partner of Theophilo Da Costa.

Yet, when I said, "Throw this offal

overboard," he said, "No; we can hardly do that."

And why, forsooth? For no other reason than that in his particular section of your country it was not the custom.

"*Bom*," I said. "Very well. Let us shoot them, then, with pistols. For it is well known, *mi amigo*, that in a single town of your section of the world they kill more men with pistols than we do in all Brazil in a year."

But that, he maintained, was different. We could not in cold blood kill them. *Miravel*, what an ethic! Would not those pirates have gaily cut all our throats at one stroke while we slept? Does one refrain from killing a snake because one has first caught it, and request of it then please to bear no hostility in the future?

But what use? He overrode us, myself and our three friends who had helped us to capture the gang; and it was his idea that we should make them paddle our *batelãos*, naked like Indians and sweating like swine, up to Manaos City for all the people to see and to be a warning on the river that Theophilo and Peloroxo were no down-river rats, who could easily be robbed.

Not that it was not a good idea. The town is still talking, you say. Ho-ho; and it was in truth a spectacle, senhor. Never before in history had river-men come in with a crew of white men straining at the paddles while naked Indians looked on and laughed. A *fiesta* it was for the whole town. There at the floating dock of the Companna Navigazione where all the folk, white and black and breed, waited to meet us, there was a time when for a moment I thought that my friend would have killed the Sylvestra with his own hand. But, alas, he holds his temper nowadays much better than when he first came to us.

The Sylvestra, when he had scrambled up from the *batelão* to the dock, ragged and lean and with hands bleeding from the paddle; when he felt himself safe at last among the policemen of the wharf, his rage of many days mounted within him like a tornado and he champed his teeth and shook his fist down at the boat and screamed:

"I will pay you for this! I, Dom Sylvestra da morada Cardozo! Just you wait, you low-bred Americano!"

It was then that I thought my friend would leap on to the dock and rend him from the very arms of the police and tear him apart. His face grew as red as his fiery hair and the veins of his neck swelled while he gathered his legs under him for the leap. But then—pity of it—he slowly relaxed again and shrugged and smiled with a twisted mouth. To Sylvestra of the high-sounding names he said:

"Senhor, you compliment me. You call me by my country. It is the proudest thing you can say to me. I return the compliment. I will wait for you, you high-born mestizo."

At which there was a guffaw from the populace that shook the wharf. For it was an open whisper in the town that the Sylvestra, for all his proud patronymic, had a dark skeleton in his family closet. As for the dom, he choked on his fury and would have fallen into the water. But his friends took hold of him under the arms and hurried him away.

So the opportunity passed. And at the time we all laughed and we thought that, after all, we had not come so badly out of it. And when we returned up the Rio Negro again to our water above Santa Isabel, where the river steamer goes no farther and there is no more law, there was one law among the nut-gatherers, and that was what we said.

Yet, "when you have a caiman in the net, kill it," is a good rule. We ought by all means to have done away with that Sylvestra fellow and to have told the law that protected him to come and get us in our own water. Even if we spared his hired bandits to paddle our *batelãos;* for he, as I remember it, with his office-bred muscles, made a very poor paddle man. He was the head of the whole plan; the brains, and, what is more dangerous, the money.

Brains, we ourselves were not without—at all events, not the Fire-Head. He has ideas, has that lad—even though some of them are still provincial—and I give him credit that I am hard put to it to match my experience of the rivers against his wit. But money! That is another thing altogether. Especially when there is a great deal of it. For money in our country here buys the right of the question every time.

Which is where that God's country of the Red-Head's has an advantage; for he avers stoutly that while in the eastern part of your country and in the western fringe it is as with us here; in the central wilderness where his townlet is situated all men who

are elected to office are to be trusted. Though we of the rivers say to him:

"If they are men who are elected by votes, they must be politicians, is it not? Well, how then?"

But he insists that those central people—and most particularly those of his home town—are not like us Brazilians. We—that is to say, I—I know him now; and I do not take offense at his superiorities. For his home town is that lad's religion; and who but a fool quarrels with a man's religion? But that is neither here nor there. My argument was that trouble would come to us out of sparing that Dom Sylvestra. As it surely did.

We went up to our own water above Santa Isabel laughing at the position of affairs and well pleased with ourselves; and among the *castanheiros* there, the nut-gatherers, we were received with deference. Not that my own position had not been well assured

from a long time before—I am Theophilo of the Upper Rivers. But among the *padrãos* of the nut-gatherers there had been a certain element of provincial-minded fellows who had been inclined to regard this Red-Head as an interloper, even though I had let it be known that he and I were partners in a venture together.

And when he explored into the Marauia Creek to which I had given him a hint of possible value, and by using all his wit and his North American energy had opened up his profitable ivory-nut business which had been there all the while under their noses, leaving those indolent fellows to their *castanha*, which markets under the name of Brazil nuts at one and a half milreis per kilo—then they conceived an active hostility against the "foreigner."

For it must be admitted that we in our own South America regard our cousins of the North as foreigners just as much as they do us—a fact which was a source of continuous amazement to this Red-Head when he first came among us; for it is a strange vanity of his corner of the earth to regard all the other peoples of the world as foreigners.

But now, upon our return after our successful hunt after this gang of the most ruffianly characters on the river, all that attitude was changed. It was Senhor Peloroxo here and Amigo Peloroxo there. He was one of us; a man of the Upper Rivers, and a leader of men.

So we went back to our business with a feeling of security. There was none on the river who would care to dispute our water with us. So secure did I feel that I left my own business of collecting plumes in the hands of a man of mine, a mestizo half-breed by the name of Raimundo, knowing that I need not be present in person to fight off encroachers. Which, let me tell you, was a condition hitherto unknown in the rivers, where, if a man could not very thoroughly hold what he had, others would come like crows picking at the feast that would presently be.

I CAME down to the Marauia *igarapê* to join my energies with the Red-Head. For this Marauia, while we call it a creek in comparison with the Rio Negro, is considerable of a river itself. It winds back into the low-lying jungles for at least a hundred miles. Which is as far as I have explored; and with its own sluggish tributaries it covers more territory than I can guess.

The Red-Head had already organized some four hundred of the local Indians into a labor force to gather the tagua fruit and to build canoes and sheds and so forth. Yet in order to make the most of this profitable industry much remained to be done. The Red-One's father had gone home in haste to divert a part of his factory to the handling of our product; and there were his machines gaping to transform our nuts into buttons and a dozen other things of "genuine ivory." So it behooved us to bestir ourselves; for it seems that in the manufacturing world to keep a machine idle is a greater crime than to buy the raw material at a fraction of a *centavo* more than a competitor has paid.

To build up a business in the jungles—any business, from balata to feathers—hinges upon a single element. Labor. Of what value would be millions of tagua fruit in an exclusive tract if there were no labor to collect it? Yet all the available labor seemed to have been organized already. Four hundred men and their families, you must understand, are a considerable populace for a territory of a hundred miles or so square in the jungles; though men of the cities, who do not understand, are surprized, having an idea that in the tropical forest life is prolific.

But this is the natural law and it is very simple. It is farming that permits people to live together in large communities—the planting of grain and the raising of meat. Men who live mostly by hunting can not live in communities any larger than the surrounding jungles can supply with meat. So that, even where a site for a village may be most favorable, it can not be utilized if too close within the hunting range of the next village, which is some fifteen or twenty miles. Our Marauia, therefore, was populated almost to the limit. We were at odds with a natural law, which is no easy thing to circumvent.

But the Red-Head shrugged without a care.

"The question is one only of food," he said.

"Food is easy," said I. "The Black Water above Santa Isabel breeds the hugest *pirarucu* of any part of the river. If we but announce that we are in the market for it a hundred fishermen will set out to spear and dry great stinking slabs of them. A few canoes detailed to that commissariat transport will easily keep up a steady supply of the foul stuff, enough to feed a thousand men. A few other canoes sent up to Camanaos, where the sauba-ants are not bad, will bring down mandioca or farinha meal; and with the two we will have a food supply which will be a delicacy to these creek-dwellers. But a food supply does not breed men all in one season."

The Red-One only laughed with all the confidence of the youth of North America.

"Good," said he. "If food is so easy, let us immediately send word to the fishermen and to the manioc-cultivators so that they will be ready for us, and let us go and get a thousand men."

"That is good talking; but let us hear something about the doings," I told him; though I did not jeer as readily as I might have done in the beginning of our acquaintance; for I knew by now that he might produce at any moment the most unexpected of plans.

He chuckled; and I knew then that his quick wit had once again outstripped my experience.

"Who but yourself taught me," said he, "to control my labor through the *ipagês?* Through my witch-doctor have I organized my force of four hundred and kept them in hand. Let us go, therefore, to that old scamp; for he is a very wise man."

So we went to the chief *ipagê* and made him a present of a small bag of sugar; and told him our problem. And he said at once, as I had said, that labor was a question of food. But, food was arranged for, we told him; and when he understood our arrangements he marveled and said that the cleverness of the white men was wonderful to behold; never had the jungle Indians, starved though they might be, thought of such an arrangement. And the rest was easy then, said he. If food could be available, men would be no difficulty at all.

So he took our carved sticks and added a pattern or two to them and sent us to the chief *ipagê* of the upland villages at the far ends of our creeks; and we gave him presents of empty bottles and matches and such stuff and told him our need. And he grinned and said:

"For my brother of the Marauia I will do this thing. But these presents are not enough."

So we gave him a good sheath knife in addition; and he told us to go away for five days so that no blame would attach to us, and then to come back and talk to the people. We dropped down-creek a day's journey to lay up for a while; and we made a holiday of it, which we felt we had well earned after our breathless chase of those bandits.

We went hunting and made wagers on long shots—ten milreis for each pair hit and fifty milreis penalty for each miss; and in this I won money. For while I do not attempt to compete with the Red-Head with a pistol—that being the national weapon of his country—with a rifle it is different. I have lived twenty years with a rifle in my hands; and twenty years of practise count for something.

So I won the price of one of those new German rifles of small bore and unbelievable velocity; much to the chagrin of my friend, who does not like to be beaten at anything.

And in the meanwhile the *ipagê* up there did—I don't know what he did. But all those headwater villages fell sick with a griping of the belly; and the *ipagê* called a big devil-hunting and performed his mumbo-jumbo and what not; and then he and all his lesser witch-doctors made pronouncement that the Jurupari of the jungles was strong against those villages and that the only thing to do would be to abandon that country for a while.

THEN we came back most providentially and told the people that we would be ready to welcome them lower down in the Marauia and that there would be no war with our men on account of food, for food would be supplied to every man who worked. And, *basta*, that was all there was to it; though that old thief of an *ipagê* told us that he had promised presents to some dozen or so of his lesser wizards on our behalf.

To transport a whole tribe just to suit our labor requirements sounds like a feat of a powerful king. Yet was it not by the knowledge of how to do it that the great Colombo balanced the egg upon its tail? And again, is it not by holding that superior knowledge that one rules as a king?

So were we kings in our Marauia country. And after all, what is it to move a jungle tribe? Nothing. Given evil spirits enough to haunt them, they move of themselves. The jungles are full of deserted *molocas*, moldy and overgrown with the wild granadilla, because some devil-devil thing frightened their inhabitants.

These up-creek people loaded their few pots and weapons and ceremonial dancing gear into their canoes and sent them downstream. They themselves followed along the shore. Within a month they were established.

These are a communal people in those jungles, you must understand; and, as such, they have an extraordinary knack for working all together for the community's good and so of making the most of their joint energy. We established them at selected sites along our creeks; and within the month, as I say, they had built their great community barracks of split *chunto* palm and thatch and were established and ready to work.

We went similarly to two other upland communities at our creek ends, with presents and a good introduction to their *ipagês;* and in each case the evil spirits of the jungle worked loyally in our favor. Something more than a thousand men with their families we brought down to our tagua grounds and they had no cause to complain.

Our commissariat department was running smoothly and for the first time in their lives those people were sure of their food supply—which, in the jungles, let me tell you, is a precarious question. All those expatriates were living as they had never lived before; and they began asking themselves why they had not thought of this splendid plan long ago.

Yet all that was not accomplished without work and much careful organization on our part—or, I should say, rather, on the part of the Red-Head. For it is my observation that a genius for organization seems to be a heritage peculiar to the Americans of the North which we of the South do not understand so well as yet. The plans were his, and I but supplied out of my experience the suggestions as to how they might be adapted to our environment.

When it was all over; when all the planning and running back and forth and settling of our people was done, the Red-One at last was ready to stretch his shoulders and wrinkle his nose and grin, and to say to me—

"*Amigo*, do you know what we have accomplished, you and I?"

And I said:

"Assuredly. We have imported a labor force of a thousand good men."

And he:

"Yes, a thousand men we have; good hunters and good canoe-men and good fighting men; but shiftless Indians all, who do not like steady work. Have you thought how we are to control our labor, now that we have got it?"

And I answered that, of course, we would control it as he had controlled his four hundred — by making presents to their *ipagês* and holding the thread of witchcraft over the lazy ones. It was very simple for one who had once learned the trick of playing in with the witch-doctors instead of against them. But he said, yes, it had been

simple with his own *ipagé* of his down-creek people; but with three others, new importations, each jealous of his prestige, who could tell what factions and what intrigues would arise? And he laughed again and told me:

"It is simpler even than that, *amigo*. For, consider—our promise to them is that there shall be food in plenty for every man who works."

And I, as the weight of this thing broke in upon me and I understood the full power of it, I laughed, too, and shouted out of a full heart and I embraced him; whereupon he condemned me to perdition with the appalling sacrilegious oaths of the gringos; for, though he was now an up-river man, one of us, there remained some of our ways which he could never abide.

But I continued to laugh for a whole day. For we had built up in our Marauiá there what had never been on the river before—a great and absolutely dependable labor force. And with labor to be relied upon as surely as the crop which the good God furnished each season, and with a market gaping for our product, what possible thing could stand in the way of an assured and wealthy future? Had we not a right to laugh?

THEN came the missionary.

I said—

"Drive him out."

Though this one was not as bad as some. He came, not with a somber face and a breviary and an obsession to put cloth upon the naked heathen and thereby to save their souls. He was of some foreign sect or other; I could not detect by his accent from what land; and he was one of those more sensible ones who believe that the way to a savage's soul lies through his material advancement. So he brought a world of enthusiasm and a canoeful of trinkets and another canoeful of seeds to teach the Indians how to alleviate their lot by growing corn and beans and such stuff.

Of what use to tell such a man that our Indians were well supplied with as much variety of trade-goods as they needed; that they were better fed and generally much better off than a hundred communities who had greater need of his ministrations?

Of what use to tell him that the growing of crops in the Black Water is governed, not by man's industry, but by his own good God, who sends the sauba-ants; that only here and there are places—as at Cananaos—where the ants, for some inscrutable reason, do not prevail in such swarms as to eat up the planted crop as soon as the roots began to show succulence? No use at all; for the reasons that sway missionaries are as mysterious as those that govern the sauba-ants.

So I said to the Red-Head out of my experience:

"*Amigo*," I said, "experience is the one teacher who is always right. Never was a missionary who did not result in trouble. Let us chase him out of our country."

But the Red-One had his national feeling about missionaries.

"No," he said. "We can not treat a missionary so."

And he proceeded to tell me with a queer twist of his racial pride how many millions of dollars were donated in America every year for the saving of heathen souls by good people who hoped thereby to buy salvation for their own souls. The enormity of the sum gave me a cramp in my belly; it was more than the revenue of the whole state of Amazonas.

"*Meu Deus*," I said to him. "That is a miscarriage of wealth! Well, you have had opportunity here to see something of the results. At the time of the great war it was told as a wonder to gape at how many thousands of dollars it cost your wealthy North America to kill one man. It seems to me, my friend, that it costs as much to save one soul."

But he insisted only that we must at least show hospitality to this wandering missionary, for they were very good men.

"Assuredly," I agreed. "They are men of great nobility and sacrifice."

In which I was not jeering at him. For I have seen the unspeakable hardships which they, inexperienced men, have endured in the jungles in order to carry out what is their conviction of their duty. But, unhappily, nobility of character does not of necessity carry with it an equal supply of wisdom to deal with practical matters. As I said to the Red-Head:

"They are good men; and without doubt they are good for the Indians among whom they settle. But they are not so good for us who employ those Indians."

But he launched forth into a long exposition of a doctrine that Indians were also

human and that the rights, even of employers, were of no greater importance than those of workers; and that in his part of his country—and so forth, without end.

It was easy for me to understand how a people of so sentimental a frame of mind could supply so many tons of good money for the uplifting of the savage. But I interrupted him.

"I am a man who believes in experience rather than in theories," I told him. "If I have no experience of my own by which I can profit, I am ready to profit by the experience of others. Tell me, then: Is there one instance in the history of your so sympathetic part of your country where one has removed three communities of Indians from their habitation—of their own free will, without violence; and where one has transplanted them to a better environment and has kept faith in all matters of trade-payment and food? If there is, tell me the story of it and let us both profit therefrom, instead of losing our heads over a theory of altruism."

But he knew of no such story, and insisted only that in his country conditions were different.

"Rubbish!" said I. "Indians are Indians and white men are white men, and their ends do not meet. You and I, we know the trick of serving our own ends and of keeping our men satisfied at the same time. All around us are white men and Indians who are at variance with one another. Let us send this missionary packing to some other community that needs him."

He was forced to admit the justice of my stand. Yet, as I have said, it was the heredity of his home town to be as appallingly set in his convictions as a missionary himself; and he argued far into the night that discourtesy could not be shown to a holy man. So the upshot of it all was that the man stayed in our country. And trouble, of course, came of it.

WE DID not see much of him. He was, as a matter of fact, a furtive sort of person who would rather dive into the darkness of the big trees than come forth and make a sociable visit. This one, different to many others, had an obvious experience among the heathen. The suns and the rains and the fevers of the jungles had reduced him down to a leathery covering of sinew over his bones. He was one of those who had survived and was left with nothing for disease to take hold of. A tall, gaunt fellow with a high forehead and hunted eyes. I have met others like him before. Students of books oppressed by their own consciences.

This one refused even the hospitality which the Red-Head offered, and preferred to live, attended by a couple of his faithful converts, in his own two dug-out canoes in the most uncomfortable manner that could be devised. This was the rainy season; and believe me when I say it, a dug-out canoe with a palm-thatch shelter thrown over one end is no place for a human to live in the rain.

We ourselves had not much to do, beyond establishing our newly imported people in comfort; for our crop was but ripening and the labor of collecting could not begin till after the monsoon. So we—even I, who have nothing against such men personally—would have been glad enough to invite him in to our comfortable hut perched high on stilts out of the wet and to play a game of cards or to roll the dice occasionally. But he preferred to go voyaging forth on his mission up and down our creeks, driven always by his fear of his own pernicious conscience.

I was even becoming content to let him come and go at his will. But our *ipagé* came to us and said—

"*Kariwa,* give me leave to kill this white spirit-doctor who comes among us with his base magics."

I smote the Red-Head with my elbow in his ribs and said:

"Was it I who told you or was it not?" And to the *ipagé,* "Before we talk of killing, tell us what evil the man does."

He planted his ghost stick into a crevice of the cane floor and squatted behind it. It was not easy for him to make a charge. But he said:

"How can one make a charge against a wizard before his wizardry is complete? I know only that he deals in the lower magics with grubs and with earthworms as do the foolish tree-dwelling sorcerers of the homeless Maku tribes; he does not use the warm-blooded beasts as we do."

The Red-Head laughed and said—

"That is little enough reason to kill a man."

But the old wizard added another and a weightier reason.

"*Kariwa*, the sorceries of such a man do not matter to us of the higher magic. I am not afraid of them. But among the common people are always ignorant ones who run after any new trickery that is more in keeping with their own monkey understanding. By his running up and down in our jungles and by his scorn of our ways, breaking the tabus of custom and laughing at the things of the dark, that white man is spoiling my influence among my people; and the red *Kariwa* knows that my influence is necessary."

"Aha!" said I to my friend. "There is the inevitable trail of the missionary. This is my observation out of my experience. The closer they may be to saints and the greater their own capacity for faith, the more incontrollable is their urge to persuade all other people among whom they come to think exactly the same way as they do. And this is a truth out of all the earth's history that the beliefs of no people can be suddenly upset without causing disruption of the community which has grown up in those beliefs. My friend, my judgment out of my experience has given way to your whim out of your sentiment. But it is now enough. This man must go."

The Red-Head scowled ferociously and picked at the seam of his breeches with his big red hands. So clear was it that he was struggling with his inherited convictions that I had to laugh. But he said at last:

"I am forced to agree with your experience, Theophilo. We can not afford to harbor such a source of trouble. But let us at least give him grace till the rainy season shall be past; it is not decent to chase any man out to seek a new lodgment during the rains."

With which I was well enough content. And to the *ipagé* the Red-Head said:

"Old wise one, let us make an agreement. Do you protect this man from death for a little while yet; and in the meantime, in order to uphold your influence, tell your people that you will make so strong a magic as will compel the two white *Kariwas* to drive that other white man out."

And with that the *ipagé* had to be contented too. But he grumbled as he gathered up his stick and his magic bag and muttered that ill luck would come of it.

"Evil will come of permitting this monkey magic with beetles and things," he insisted. "Such an affront to our art should not be permitted. But if the *Kariwa* protects the man, well, let it be; but ill luck will come of it."

And so, grumbling, he went away. The Red-One looked at me and laughed; and I said:

"They are all alike. Whether white or black or brown, they are all intolerant of another priest of another sect."

But the old wizard was right. Ill luck surely befell us in heaps.

THE first was a sudden information from our commissariat department that the price of fish had gone up.

"Gone up?" we wanted to know. "What is the sudden reason for *pirarucu* to rise in price?"

But our men did not know. All they could say was that other people up the river were buying fish and so the supply was short.

"*Quê diablo!*" we exclaimed both at once. "What is happening all of a sudden in the outside world?"

We had been so busy in there in our jungles with transplanting our new tribes—what with getting them satisfactorily settled and putting them to hewing out new canoes and apportioning the limits of their hunting ground and so on—that we had had no time to go down into the big water; nor had there been need. But this was something else again. That people were buying fish farther up the Rio Negro where there were almost no people was a matter to be looked into.

So we took my *batelão* and six paddlemen and made the two days' journey to the mouth of our creek and into the discomfort of the big river. Discomfort, you must understand, because there in our creeks, overhung and roofed in by the thick trees, the rain was no more than a drip; heavy enough to beat in the thatch of a house, but after all, straight; for in the jungles, of course, there is no wind. But out on the open river—*celestes*, what a sheet of water that was for steady hours at a stretch. No place for a *batelão* which, in spite of its roofed after-half, required to be baled every hour.

However it was clear that this demand for fish meant that something unusual was happening; and it is my observation that he who gets information quickly of unusual

happenings thrives best on the rivers. So we accepted the discomfort, as jungle men must, and dropped down another day's journey to Santa Isabel; and there we learned news indeed.

No less than that this Sylvestra fellow to whom we had donated his life had leapt about the city of Manaos, gnashing his teeth and swearing that he would run us out of business if it cost him the whole of his fortune. The Red-Head was inclined to laugh. But I said:

"This is not so much of a joke, my friend. For when a man of wealth means to do a damage—few things are impossible for him."

As indeed was the case. For this Sylvestra, as I have said, was no fool. What he had done was this: A little inquiry among those bandits in his pay who knew the upper water elicited a hint or two, which Sylvestra was quick to grasp. A little exploration, sending out those river-rats at his own expense, had discovered tagua again in the Cababuri Creek, some hundred miles or so above us; and, *basta*, a rival business was to his hand.

Money, of course, made everything easy. Where we had to build up slowly and with care, all that he had to do was to send up men and boats and supplies; and there in the Cababuri he had established a very prince of *ladrones* to set up an organization of workers who would be ready to begin collecting the nut crop as soon as the rains should cease.

I knew the fellow. One Manduco, who was a famous river-pirate, a bold snatcher of lesser men's goods. His system of robbery was simple. He would descend by night upon some lone *batelão* with a crew of choice cutthroats, breeds all of them as black as himself and every one of them naked; and they would thoroughly loot the boat and disappear; and in the morning the tale would be that a gang of bold wild Indians had made the raid.

It was a silly trick and all the river knew of it. Yet the fellow was crafty enough so that many feared him. Though I have laid up alongside of him more than once and have slept ostentatiously in a hammock slung between the tree-trunks ashore, hoping almost that he might attempt a coup, for I knew my own crew and my *capitão*. It appears that he must have known something of their reputation, too, for he always remained a perfectly satisfactory neighbor.

He was a clever enough rogue, was that Manduco, and he had at some time previously played politics with some of the other brigands in the government, so that he had been appointed *agente dos Indios*, Indian agent for the upper river, which gave him license to conscript laborers whenever they might be required for the public good. Which meant that up there, where there was no one to say him yes or no, he could impound nut-gatherers wherever and whenever he could catch them.

But beyond petty robberies he had never accomplished much hitherto beyond killing a score or so of Indians who were slow to obey him and generally oppressing the jungle folk to further his own aggrandizement. Now, with all the financial support of the Sylvestra behind him, he had expanded like a dead manatee in a stagnant pool.

King of the Rio Negro, he was calling himself; and I could well picture to myself the bloated state that kept up there, surrounded by women and browbeaten attendants and having at his disposal all the Indians whom he could catch and frighten into working for him. It was the makings of a strong organization that the ruffian had in the Cababuri *igarapé*. Small gratification that our informant told us with a grin:

"But for all that, the talk on the river is that he does not feel himself any too secure when he has Theophilo and the Peloroxo to deal with; for he has built him a regular fortress with a palisade of pointed stakes at the mouth of his creek and has filled in with tree-trunks so that only a narrow passage remains, across which is stretched a great chain."

Yet the Red-Head shrugged with his eyebrows and laughed, as he was always ready to do, whatever the situation.

"Let him be," he said. "He can't hurt us. Let him organize a working crew. We are ready ahead of him and our men are satisfied, as his will never be. Furthermore, if he perfects an enormous organization and floods the world with ivory nuts, what does it matter to us? Our market is in our own family, and all that we have to do is to keep the machines going in the family factory. Ours is an unbeatable combination, Friend Theophilo."

Which of course, was true; and there was

comfort in the thought. Still I cursed myself for a fool. I knew this Cababuri water, though I had never explored it very seriously; and I had suspected before now that there might be tagua in the back creeks; for they must perforce take their rise in the same long range of hills running east to west where our water came from. Yet how was I to know that this Sylvestra would suddenly develop an energy to send scouts through all that country before we would be ready to take it over?

I was reminded of what my good friend the Padre Balzola, who was very wise, had so often told me.

"Hate is a force more powerful than any other, my son, for the devil himself fosters it and helps it along."

And so I told the Red-Head. But he shrugged and said:

"The high-born mestizo, when he threatened like an angry ape on the wharf, told me to wait and he would get even. Well, let's go home and wait. He can't touch us and it is a teaching of the business college of my home town that a legitimate competition never can fail to be a healthy stimulus to trade."

Well, what was there to do but to go back to our own water and spend the remaining weeks of the rainy season in perfecting our organization; apportioning men and canoes, so many to each; marking out collecting routes for our new men, appointing captains of districts and under them so many men to cover so much ground; arranging storage depots where the canoes would call; sending scouts to observe and mark off the areas where the crop was ripening first; and so forth?

A hundred matters there were which had to be attended to so as to be ready for the collecting; and we were well content; for we knew that with our good start over those rivals of ours and with the good-will of our men we would ship out more nuts than they in spite of the wealth that was behind them; and while, as the Red-One said, we had no cause to fear for our business, it was a matter of pride with us that we should not be outdone.

So we sweated along and had no worry till the rainy season began to thin out and presently passed.

And then the ill luck that our *ipagé* had prophesied fell upon us like the Amazon flood.

THE first of the nut crop began coming in, and, *maldiça d'Deus*, it was worthless! A good eighty per cent. of it was drilled by borers. Some accursed grub or other had invaded our forests and attacked the fruit while it was yet young and pulpy; and their tunnels went through and through in every direction while their nests filled the outer skin with a webby brown powder.

I, with all my experience had never seen the vermin before. Nor had I anywhere heard of so wholesale damage. One must expect a certain small loss in any jungle produce, of course; though never very much, for it is a simple law of the jungle that only such things persist as have developed an immunity against pests. But this was a plague of the Egyptians. We were infested.

Load after load came in from our collecting depots and we fell upon each fresh consignment with palpitating hearts and split open, not one but a thousand of each, and laid bare by the hundred the work of those demoniac insects. We looked at each other in consternation and what was there to say? Nothing, except to call upon the name of the devil with each new testing.

This was ruin. From whatever end of our jungle the stuff came in, it was all the same; all bored into a filigree by these accursed grubs. We who had flaunted ourselves that we had an unbeatable combination, we were hanged by our very rope of security.

The two of us could well subsist for a season or two on our previous profits; or, if need be, we could turn our hands to a dozen different trades of the river. We could feed ourselves well enough without anxiety. But those machines over there in the family factory that demanded feeding more insatiably than an army; it was on their account that we felt the sinking of our stomachs.

The Red-Head was more desperately hit than I. I had not been on the Black Water for twenty years without seeing my ups and downs; and never so far down that I could not see an up-grade somewhere on another road. But then, I stood by myself, with only myself to care for. With my partner it was something of a more desperate matter. Not that he could not look after himself, he had wit enough to find a dozen new businesses. But those machines at home.

They represented a big investment which his father had put in in order to strengthen his son's business out here.

It had been a hard battle to win the old man's confidence; and the old man, in his turn, must have gone through an even harder battle to persuade the patriarchs of the family that the young one who refused to follow in their own well-ordered footsteps was worthy of confidence. And now this last of all expected —— luck had descended upon us.

It was on that account that his ruddy face went gray and his so-careless eyes were filled with pain. Yet what could we do? Can man fight against the sudden viciousness of nature? The Red-One, however much he might try nowadays not to make a rude comparison, could not hold himself from harking back to the superiority of his home land.

"Back home," said he, speaking hopelessly, "there is an institute of the government which, if an industry is menaced, will send out, free of all charge, men who are experts in all things that grow as well as in the pests that attack them; and they will study the condition and find a remedy."

"Such an institute is also at Para," I told him. "Though not free. At a cost one can import a *scientifico* who knows the ways and the whys of insect pests. But when a man has once been struck down by such a catastrophe, from where is he to find the cost?"

Cien diabos, that was just our case. We had put all our earlier profits into expanding our business so as to justify the installation of those terrible machines and to keep them going; we had invested in tools and trade-goods and food in advance to build our organization for the profit to come out of the future. This season would have set us, on the firm road; and here had the Evil One himself descended upon this season. All the government institutions in the world could not mend that.

Never had such a prophecy of ill luck come so terribly true. The *ipagé* came to us, of course, and he was grieved, for I think he loved us as much as a wizard may. But he could not refrain from telling us that he had told us so; and he added with ill-omened conviction that worse would come of it yet; for under our orders he had protected that low magician whom he should have killed long ago; and the man was still alive and was continuing his foul spells with crawling things away up at the head of our creeks now.

On a sudden we looked at one another, the Red-Head and I; and I knew that he could read the thought that was in my mind. Crawling things! Why was our *ipagé* so insistent with his talk about base magic with insects? We had laughed at his superstitions; but what was this fellow doing up there? Missionizing, he said; but how many of the heathen had he converted? I could think of no immediate connection. But, Sylvestra, was my suspicion. That man was as cunning as a bush viper and a hundred times as vicious; and who knew better than he the weak places of a business?

So I looked at the Red-Head and he at me, and his eyes became narrow and he said to me, speaking softly, as if one might overhear—

"Who other than himself told us that he was a missionary?"

I nodded. That was just what was coming into my mind. And I crooked my finger at my *capitão*, who squatted in a thin patch of sun before the split-cane veranda of our house.

"The *batelão*," I told him; and he put his fingers to his lips and whistled like a chicken-hawk; and in a moment the boat's crew were running from their huts and throwing off the lashings.

That is how I like to be ready at all times; for it is my observation that he who remains readiest for whatever call may come in the jungle lives longest. The Red-Head reached his arm within the door for his rifle and pistol-belt and he, too, was ready.

We took the *ipagé* with us and on the way we questioned him with a very much more respectful consideration of his superstitions about base magic. The man was now ahead of the Murucuri Creek, he said, a day and a half's journey away.

"Where the crop ripens late," grunted the Red-Head with meaning. "The man may be all that he says, and we can not be hasty; but it must be admitted that his mysterious aloofness lays him open to suspicion; and who knows but that this magic stuff may have something to do with the ripening?"

And what about this magic, we wanted to know. What did the man do?

The *ipagé* threw out his lean hands and spat between them over the side of the

batelão. What did he know about such magic, he grumbled. It was not his office to spy upon the crude fumblings of the homeless jungle-dwellers such as that white charlatan.

But this he did know from the reports of his neophytes whom he was training in the higher wizardry. That the man made a magic first with pieces of wood which he clapped together and made an incantation over them, and lo, he had a box; and in such boxes he nurtured the grubs and worms and things which were the fetishes of his religion, exactly as did the wizard of the wandering Maku tribes.

This was all a queer claptrap of a ceremony to me; but the Red-Head grunted and said—

"Those pieces of wood which turn into a box sound like a portable hive or something."

And I added to that—

"Not the paraphernalia of a missionary, *amigo*, who should deal rather with a portable chapel."

And to the *ipagê* I said,

"Old Wise One, let the word go out among your people as we travel that no light canoe may go ahead and bring word of our coming to this homeless tree wizard."

And so it was that we came to the headwaters of the Murucuri Creek in our foot-hills without warning. That is to say, without warning to our supposed missionary. Though we had warning enough as we drew nearer to his camp; for at the sight of our *ipagê* squatted there in the bows of our craft, the few Indians whom we met from time to time came and told us everything.

So when we were still some three or four kilometers below the camp we left our *batelão;* for a *batelão* is a heavy boat and it is impossible to propel it without a certain thumping of paddles against its sides; and we lay down in the canoe of one of our outpost nut-gatherers and stole up the creek, the Indians dipping their paddles with no more sound than a fish; which was a most necessary precaution, for in those narrow creeks, walled in by solid jungle on both sides and roofed over by the interlaced branches, sound hangs low and travels along the surface of the water for unbelievable distances.

We came upon the little clearing of the camp all unannounced, ourselves lying most uncomfortably upon our bellies in the wet bottom of the canoe, I for my part with my rifle thrust through a hole in a mat before me; for a man who might be capable of doing what we suspected this one of doing would be no fool and would be a man to be wary of.

A WRETCHED enough camp it seemed to be; poor enough even for a missionary. A lopsided tent stood under a tree and the most meager of gear lay about; some paltry clothing hung from a line and the two canoes were drawn up on the bank. How the man must have survived through the rainy season was a wonder. Whatever he was and whatever he might be doing, it was clear that he was an enthusiast who would sacrifice everything to the furtherance of his work—even as a missionary.

He did not see us at first. He sat upon a box, busied with some writing, till one of his Indians called his attention and pointed silently with his chin at our silent approach. He jumped up, seemingly annoyed at having been surprized, and came down to the bank, demanding bruskly in the Geral dialect what did we want.

And then he saw us.

At the same moment I knew that, whatever might be the man's business, he was guilty. His face was already gaunt and haggard from the hardship of the life that he had been living; but it leapt suddenly beyond all emaciation and became a death-mask. But only for a second. The man was no dull wit; he was an intellectual, and he gained control of himself immediately. But it had been enough. I sat up and grinned at him.

"*Bons dias, Senhor Missionario,*" I said to him. "Since you do not come to visit us, you see we come at last to visit you."

He was able to smile like a starved wolf and to return the greeting; though he made no move to invite us to come ashore and accept the small coffee of courtesy. I could see that he was thinking desperately. So we stepped ashore without the invitation and walked toward his meager camp with all eyes open for we didn't know what. There was nothing to see, of course. A box or two which might have held food but which drew our attention on account of our *ipagê's* denunciation of magic boxes; but that was all.

Yet he saw us look, and I knew that his

conscience told him what was in our minds. What was behind his high forehead I could not guess; but never did I watch a man more carefully. As for the Red-Head, he was ever a man of direct action. He walked to the nearest of the boxes and poked at it with his feet.

Then the man found speech and seemed at last to remember the conventions of hospitality.

"Ah," he exclaimed. "I am being most impolite. Excuse a moment, senhores."

He stepped to his tent and stooped under the flap. So easily it was done that for a moment my vigilance relaxed. But, *graç' Deus*, my ears are trained to fine hearing from many years in the jungles where the ears are more important than the eyes.

I detected a soft click from within the tent, a sound that was too familiar to be mistaken. In the same instant I snatched my friend by the arm and hurled the both of us flat upon the ground in the direction of the nearest tree.

As we rolled the report roared from within the tent and the ball racketed away among the bushes. All in that one second's clarity of thought that comes to one in tense situations, it seemed to me, even as we rolled, that the ball clattered among the branches higher than there was any excuse for at that short distance; and as we gained the shelter of our tree without another shot, I was already saying in my mind that the man was a poor hand with a gun.

Different from the Red-Head. For even as we rolled he contrived to snatch his pistol free and fire. But what could he do? The man was concealed within the tent and we were scrambling in mad haste for our tree. A stout Soleiman it was, of a good meter and a half of girth, and as we rolled over on our bellies behind it the Red-Head turned to me and grinned with the cheerfulness that was his habit when a fight was toward.

"That at least clears the atmosphere," he said to me. "For it is evident that, whatever else he may be, he is no missionary."

"Good," said I. "If your conscience is then clear, do you shoot from that side of the tree and I from this. Low, for he will be lying down on the floor of his tent. In three or four shots apiece we ought to get him."

But the Red-Head held my hand and said:

"No. If we kill him we shall be able to learn nothing. And there is much about this business that we must find out."

That was a good thought, and I immediately agreed.

"*Bom*," I said. "Let us find out first. Doubtless we shall find a means to make him talk. The question remains how to get him alive."

"That should not be so difficult," said the Red-One.

And it was my turn then to throw myself upon him and hold him down with all my weight, for I knew what sort of a foolhardiness he was prone to commit. He would just as soon have walked forth and demanded a surrender, relying on the speed of his own pistol. And in the open, where he could see the other's movements, I would just as soon have let him. But a man hidden in a tent was another matter. So I threw myself upon him to hold him down. But he pushed me from him, grumbling.

"Get off of me, fathead," he growled. "You give me credit for being as great a fool as yourself."

Well as he learned our ways and manners, he had never outgrown that North American privilege of being insulting toward his friends.

"Well, then," I said to him, without taking offense, "how do you propose to get him?"

"Perhaps," said he with a grin, "he is not so great a fool as either of us and it may be that he will listen to reason."

He thrust his head round the circle of the tree and called to the man:

"You there, insect-worshiper or whatever you are, we give you a chance to live. From here we can rake your tent through and across with ease and safety; and if you think to escape out of the farther side our Indians will give us warning and we can cut you down before you will be out of the clearing. Now then, if you will throw your guns out of the tent first, maybe we can talk."

It was true; the man was not such a fool. He hesitated but a moment, and then he came out of his tent himself, with empty hands, and slumped down in the uttermost dejection upon one of his boxes. There was no fight left in him. And indeed it had been clear from the first that he was no fighting man. Let me say rather, not a fighter of men; in which distinction there is a considerable difference.

Squatted there as he was, in his ragged clothes, with his long knees drawn up and his head sunken between them, he presented the very picture of a most dispirited adjutant stork. We arose from our bellies and stood before him; I, not without a certain pity for the man's complete breakdown.

The Red-Head pushed his pistol back into its holster and with his hands in his breeches pockets addressed him judicially.

"My most foolish friend," he said, "what we shall do, we do not yet know. Much will depend upon how cleverly you can lie to us. Proceed, then, and talk."

The man slumped yet lower and remained silent awhile. Then he shrugged wearily and spoke—brokenly and in short sentences, as if reviewing his past.

"No lies," he said. "What is the use? I am caught and the evidence is in these boxes. I'm just as glad it is all over; because— It was a foul thing; for you fellows treated me like white men. But—I needed the money. O God, how I needed the money to continue my investigations!"

There spoke the student. It was written all over the man that he was of the breed of enthusiasts who would brave anything and sacrifice everything for his particular study. Forgetting completely our side of the matter; not speaking of the damage he had done to us, he waxed eloquent over all the lifetime that he had devoted to the observance of lice and all manner of crawling things, and about his need to prosecute certain further investigations which would prove to be of the utmost benefit to mankind. But the Red-Head interrupted him.

"Yes, yes," he said. "I begin to understand. I have met such as you before in the colleges back home. 'For the sake of science'. I know. And we—our business here—we are but the pawns to be sacrificed for the greater end. But tell us, rather than your scientific ambition, just where my enemy, Sylvestra, comes into all this."

SO THE man told us without further concealment. He was of that institution in Para, the Museo Commercial; and Sylvestra had sent for him and had bribed him with a certain sum. He hesitated to tell us the amount but finally confessed; and pitifully small it was, yet sufficient to furnish the funds for his future work on some pest or other. So he had sold himself and had brought up to our jungles a crate or two of his cultures of these boring creatures that lived upon the pulp of immature palm nuts and tagua and such fruit.

He gave them a long name which I have forgotten; and he explained that their habits had been well studied on account of their damage to the palm-oil industry of Belem; that they hatched out from eggs with the prolificness of sin itself in the form of voracious grubs that ascended the trees and grew fat upon nut-meat till their time came to turn again into beetles.

All this was a very marvel to me, who had thought that beetles were beetles and grubs were grubs. But such is the miraculous power of science. By a few milreis worth of vermin we had been destroyed. What good did it do us to know that our ruin was not at the hands of nature but of a tame and carefully nurtured insect? And what could we do with this man who had obliterated us in order that he might win the money to save perhaps a million others whom we would never know?

I shrugged and looked at the Red-Head; and he smiled with his mouth all awry and said only:

"A wise old wise one is our *ipagé;* and we have been fools. We should have paid more attention to his talk about insect magic. The lesson that I learn out of this is: Listen to the priests when they talk; for all of them, whatever their cult, know something of men."

So we stood and looked at the man all humped up upon his box of worms; and it was doubtful whether his misery was not greater than ours. My partner looked at me; and what could I suggest? So presently he shrugged too and told the man:

"Senhor Scientifico, you have done us a foul harm; but I do not know whether you have not done a greater harm to yourself. What can we do to you that will help our case? The prosecution for our quarrel, it seems, is with the Sylvestra animal."

Thereupon the man looked up with eyes like an animal that has been trapped and suddenly sees hope. A full minute he looked so, peering darkly from under his brows; and then he leapt to his feet and swore aloud by God in heaven that we were princes of the earth and the noblest of white men, and a lot more of the complimentary things that people of strong

emotions rave when they are overcome by their sentiment.

And he said that, while the damage for the season was done, except for a small portion of our late crop where he had not yet loosed his pestilence, he could cure it for the next season. For, he said, one fought insect pests with other insects and the studies on behalf of the palm-oil industry had disclosed some louse or other that devoured these lice during a period which they must spend in the earth around the roots of our trees before they could complete the cycle of their noxious existence.

Once again he was becoming enthusiastic about his culture of grubs; and I could not refrain from marveling at the wonder of science which could devote such patience to the study of crawling things. It was truly as our *ipagê* had said—no less than an insect worship. But I reminded the man:

"All very fine, my friend. But there is a cost to be considered; and over and above that is the immediate consideration of this season which goes further than a ruined crop. It extends all the way to North America, where are insatiable machines and exorbitant workmen who can not be fed upon worms."

Whereat he hung his head. But he vowed that if we could by some manner of means survive this season he would sacrifice his year to repair the wrong that he had done; that he would import his pests, the eaters of pests, and would, further, paint our trees with rings of some marvelous poison that would effectually bar such of the latter as might escape the former, and so our forest would be clean again.

And more, he would provide a fertilizer and would teach us methods of cultivation that would make our crop the finest that had ever been. All this restitution he would make—if only we could survive this season.

Well, what was there to do? We could easily keep the man in our jungles to root about among our trees by the simple process of sending out the word among our people that he must not leave our river. But in order to counteract his damage by scientific wizardry it was first necessary that he should return down to his vermin hatchery at Para. And, besides, as the Red-Head quickly remembered, we must keep faith with our *ipagê*, who had been promulgating the prophecy among his people that he was brewing a magic which would compel us to drive the other white man from our country. So perforce we took the man at his word.

I would have sent him off with a wholesome reminder of who we were; so that he might ponder upon the thought, when the temptation would come to stay in the security of his far-away city, that Theophilo of the Rivers had a reputation for paying his debts and that the Red-Head was no man to let even Sylvestra protect one from a merited punishment. But my friend stopped me.

"No," he said. "There are some men who must be controlled by threats of what will happen if they fail in their agreements; such men as those river rats and fly-by-night traders. But this man is of a different kind. By some twist of a hair's breadth his mind was set upon beetles; had it been upon religion, he would have been a missionary and equally a fanatic. They are all alike."

So he told the man:

"Senhor Scientifico, we take you at your word. Go with a whole skin. And when the season shall be ripe for your insect sorceries once more we shall expect you. But be sure to collect your money from Sylvestra; because you have surely earned it; and presently we shall come and take away from him all that he has left."

SO WE let him go, making a great show of driving him out for the sake of our *ipagê's* prestige; for it is my observation that it is good to be meticulous in matters of this sort. The old man was much pleased, and he came to us on the quiet in our house and was most professionally interested to know what we had learned about this base magic with worms which the decent dignity of his art did not permit him to meddle with.

We laughed and explained to him as much as we had understood about this beetle lore; because the man was no fool and we regarded him as our important ally in controlling all of our wild people of our jungles. But he remained unconvinced. He nodded sagely and stuffed his cheek pouch with a chew of *ipadu* leaf.

"What that man says about the ways of crawling things may be true," said he. "It may be that he knows all their comings and goings. But by that very reason it is proof that he is a sorcerer of the lower magic, a priest of insect-worshipers."

Which, after all, was not so far from the truth.

However, scientist or sorcerer, we let him go, and we were left with the problem of saving our wreck which we, with our simple methods of dealing, had thought to be unwreckable. What had we ever known about the ethics of a business when it began to grow big? I said:

"*Sangue d'Deus*, let us go down to Manaos and let us lay up our *batelão* quietly in the creek behind the new abattoir; and then on the first dark night let us go to that Sylvestra snake's house, and while you battle with his army of servants with your pistol I will stuff a gun rag into his mouth and we will carry him off to our boat and away, and hold him then till he pays in gold for the damage he has done us."

My partner rose from his despondency as I elaborated my plan and his eyes gleamed at the alluring thought. But he shook his head and said:

"No. To kidnap that carrion would be a most gorgeous piece of work, and maybe we shall do it yet as a lesson to him. But to collect a ransom, *amigo*, is a more difficult matter. Many people have tried that game and many means have been devised; but they all hinge upon one weak joint. The only argument that will extort a ransom is the fear of death if the ransom is not paid. Sylvestra, may the Green One eat him, knows that we will not cut his throat, and I would doubt that we can frighten him into that belief."

"*Picaro*," said I. "That is the fault of your principles which you have shown him."

For my observation is this: That when there is a controversy between two sides, that side which has certain principles of conscience is much hampered and fights at a disadvantage. This Sylvestra had long ago in his youth lost the faculty of distinguishing between fair dealing and foul. Hampered by no principles at all, he had wiped out not only our season's crop, but all our careful organization of labor which we had transplanted into our country and which we must somehow continue to feed if we would keep them for our next season's recuperation. So I told my foolish friend:

"*Amigo*," I said, "listen to me who know. One who wishes to afford the luxury of carrying a principle about on these rivers must bolster that feeble thing with a wit or a courage or a determination superior to his antagonist's in order to place himself at least on even terms. Therefore let us demonstrate the first two by catching this reptile out of his lair and the third by cutting off a limb a day until he pays."

But the Red-Head only laughed at me and told me with his customary lack of respect:

"Cease, old grumbler. Who but yourself taught me that there are certain things which we can not do for no other reason than that certain fellows of the lesser breeds do them? And who has preached to me the faith that the luck of the Upper Rivers will attend those who learn the ways and live by the decent laws of the rivers?"

Which, of course, was true. Though that is not a matter of principle so much as decent pride in oneself as a man. One can not descend to the baser practises of the river-rats or of business any more than a naked witch-doctor can descend to the baser magic with creeping things such as Sylvestra had no compunction in employing. Yet, angels of heaven, something had to be done. Quite aside from our present loss, on the rivers one can not afford to let it be known that one can not hold one's own. And, moreover, even a limb a day would not feed those terrible machines back home.

Nuts they must have. Nuts by the ton before the store of the last season should all be used up. And of all the nuts of the earth none but tagua would serve; though we talked frenziedly of the hard round fruit of the *babassou* palm—which alas was hollow with a soft kernel in it.

This way and that we talked, discussing even the tough core of the ironwood tree, which might be adaptable. Yet even that would have to dry, to be well seasoned, before it could be used; and long before that those machines would be hungry.

There seemed to be no way out for us in our dilemma. Till presently the Red-One's wit began to recover from the blow that had struck us and he perked his head sidewise, thinking with face screwed up and narrowed eyes; and presently he began to laugh, silently and with a heaving of his belly, till I cursed him and demanded to know what mirth he found in the predicament of those machines which his father had established for the product which we were to supply. So he ceased his giggling and said at last:

"Nuts they must have? Well, who in all

these jungles has nuts but this Manduco pirate whom friend Sylvestra has set up in the Cababuri?"

I looked at him with a sudden understanding of the wild thing that was in his mind; and as I reviewed it, *'cremento*, there seemed a possibility.

"Father of saints!" I said. "But that would be a stroke worthy of Theophilo and the Red-Head!"

And I, too, fell to laughing till my belly ached. That would be a poetic justice to play on that pirate. We could muster a fleet of some hundred and fifty canoes now which our men had hewn out for the purpose of conveying our tagua to Santa Isabel to meet the river steamer. And now since they had no *tagua* to convey, what could be more appropriate than to lay in wait and pirate the cargoes of that arch-pirate as they would presently begin to come down? *Santos*, that would be a jest that would set all the river to laughing with us.

But the Red-Head was ever impatient of what he scorned as half measures and was eager with the restless hurry of the North to save time by getting at the root of things. Direct action and a bold stroke while the other man was still thinking, was his creed.

"Why must we wait for these cargoes on the rivers?" said he. "What is to prevent us from going into this Cababuri and taking over the whole works? Since Sylvestra has ruined ours it will be justifiable to take his."

I had to laugh again at his so-typical justification of his principles, even though this was a thing that one might do with all honor; particularly since it would not by any means be easy. That Manduco was the accredited Indian agent of the government, and since he had at no time been a fool, he must surely have impressed into his service a large force of workers whom he would keep well in hand under the control of a considerable gang of his hangers-on, ruffians of all the waterfronts, who would be willing enough to serve this bold king of the Rio Negro. But the Red-Head said coolly—

"In my country we don't think so much of kings."

Which I agreed with him to be a very fine sentiment. Yet it had been in my teaching that kings well intrenched have been hard to dethrone. As I pointed out to my impetuous young friend, the position on the Cababuri was well guarded. There was but the one road, and that was by the river which, so we had been told, was fortified with a chain and which, without any doubt at all, would be garrisoned. To leave the river mouth and to hew a way through the jungles would be out of the question because men crashing about with machetes would be sure targets for men lying silently in wait.

BUT he quoted only the exploit of some general of his own country.

"When Hannibal could not come at Rome by water because of the naval defense he brought his troops all the way round by land."

"Doubtless," I said, "doubtless we can make a war against this king, and it may be that by giving all our remaining store of presents to our witch-doctors and by promising more, we may be able to persuade our men to leave their rivers and to cut a road overland through the jungles to make an attack. But I tell you that no man has ever made a march through the jungles of Amazonas. Still, you and I, Peloroxo and Theophilo, we might accomplish it—and then we would be faced with the same problem of hewing our way with machetes against silent men behind trees. And who but yourself, my friend, holds the principle that no man has the right to sacrifice the lives of other men for his own profit?"

At that he remained darkly silent and muttered only that it was so; that he was no statesman or gold-braided military person to order lesser men to fight for his personal gain. Our men would fight readily enough, he said; for they were good men and we had treated them well. But he would never burden his conscience with stirring up a propaganda through the witch-doctors; that was work fit for politicians through their newspapers, not for us of the rivers.

But at the talk of propaganda we discussed another thought; that it would be easy to send emissaries of our *ipagês* into that Cababuri country who would hardly need to tell those browbeaten Indians how much better off were our people who worked for us, and thus we would undermine the morale of the whole fighting force.

But we dismissed the plan on the ground that such propaganda would take time and would besides surely leak out, and that,

however successful, most of those brow-beaten ones could be driven to fighting by the well-paid gang of overseers, just like any other soldiers by their officers.

"No," said the Red-Head. "We must contrive somehow to come at this king fellow by water; and we must come suddenly, before resistance can be organized. And to such of our own people whom we take with us we must make it clear that they fight of their own wills and for their own profits which we will promise them, so much in cloth or cutlery per man."

All of which was a very sound theory; particularly the last; for there is no doubt that men will fight better when they know that they are going to get something for it. The question was how was this so-desirable miracle of falling unexpectedly upon our enemy's kingdom to be brought about? The Red-Head called upon me with impatience to use my wits.

"Ho!" he cried. "Think a while; rattle your brains and let them work. You know these upper waters better than any man in all Amazonas. In all these flat lands is there no creek that connects with some drain that connects again with some overflow into the Cababuri above their fortification?"

But, *caralhos*, does a man know of every seepage in the jungle floor? Only this I could tell him—that just about half-way between us and the Cababuri was an *igarapé*, a dark and sluggish water that wound away the devil knew where into the jungles. I had followed it once for a dozen miles or so to hunt manatee for their hides to make boat-lashings; and the ground, so far from showing signs of possible canals, was rather dry and gently sloping.

But for him that was enough. His restlessness at inaction was eating him up like a fire.

"——," he growled. "Let us at least go and see, so we may at all events know what is what. Any water is better than a hundred miles of solid jungle."

And he reached his long arm for his rifle and whistled for his *batelão*. Well, *carramba*, while it must be admitted that we of the South are prone to let matters slide, I am no man to lag behind. I was ready as soon as he. But I had this suggestion to make out of my experience: That a brace of dugout canoes were faster and much more silent than a *batelão;* also much easier to hide.

So we took a couple of long, thin canoes with half a dozen paddle-men apiece and provisions for a few days and went off to explore this half-way creek to look for some sort of possible connecting tributaries, such as are by no means uncommon in the flat lands. Though I had little hope of finding any such; for one reason, owing to the ground which I had observed to be dry and rising; and for another, if there were any such opening into the Cababuri, I gave credit to that Manduco fellow for being clever enough not to overlook the proper blocking of it.

And so it turned out. About fifty miles from our water was this creek. Castanheira, the Indians called it; though for what reason nobody could guess; for no *castanha* grew anywhere near it. We made the run by night; for we did not want to be seen on the river, and our men bent to it and made the full fifty miles between sunset and sunrise; which, let me tell you, is good going against the Rio Negro currents.

A dark tunnel between the trees was this Castanheira and it wound on interminably into the dimness of the inner jungle, smelling of damp, dead things like a sewer from the roof of which warm drops fell upon us; slow and sluggish and deep brown in color; good water for manatee and for the great black otter of Amazonas, of which we got two good skins.

But for our purpose it was hopeless. In three days the rising ground began to rise more steeply and little runs of fast water began to appear, by which we knew, of course, that we were coming to a spur of the same foot-hills where our own waters took their rise.

But the worse that the country grew, the better the Red-Head liked it; and he urged that we continue yet a while, pretending that he was anxious to note the number and distribution of the great trunks of mahogany and itauba which are always of interest to any man who builds boats in the jungles. Till the rising spur on our left rose to become a regular divide; and then at last he was satisfied.

"Look you now, friend Theophilo," he said. "You who know these jungles, tell me. If this water rises on this side of that divide, what are the chances of another water flowing on the other side?"

I commenced to tell him that surely there would be another water. But he interrupted to continue with his thesis.

"And if there is another water on the other side, and if no creek flows into the black river between Castanheira and Cababuri; why then, that other water must flow somewhere into the Cababuri."

With that logic he leaned forward and tapped me with meaning on the knee while his eyes glowed like a jungle cat's and he concluded—

"The question then, *amigo*, seems to be—how far will that other water be from this one?"

I made no answer. I but took up my rifle and stepped ashore; and he, grinning like a boy who is about to embark upon a voyage of discovery, followed suit. Two hours of sweating scramble up the slope with our machetes in our hands brought us up to the top; and from there the ground sloped away again as steeply as it had risen; a good indication that the distance to water would be no farther.

Another three hours of machete work, and then we were fortunate enough to strike a tapir trail which made easier going. Though a tapir trail, for all the bulk of the beast, is no paved boulevard. Over roots and round fallen trees and through cane patches with all the thorns of purgatory it rambled aimlessly in and out, and its only advantage was that we did not have to cut a road with our machetes; though that advantage was almost wiped out by the fact that we, naturally, had to shuffle along bent double.

BUT this is to be said for tapir trails: They lead always eventually to water. So we crawled along with aching loins, the Red-Head in the lead and calling appallingly upon the name of the Evil One each time that a *liana* caught him by the foot and threw him upon his face. But at the twentieth fall, instead of cursing, I heard him laugh; and I came round the bend of the trail and found him lying upon his belly in a foot deep of water and poking with his machete at a small caiman that gaped at him, hissing.

I gave a shout and hurriedly waded on past him; and there, within ten more paces through the dense cane fringe, was a beautiful slimy creek on the surface of which the rotting leaves slowly floated down toward the left.

I came back and dislodged the caiman with my foot, for the Red-Head lay too weak with laughing to fend the creature off; and together we sat in the water and beat each other upon the back and laughed till I let my rifle slip from my grasp and choke its mechanism with mud.

And had we not the right? *Diabo*, here was a highroad presented to us by Providence leading right into this Manduco's back door. Not so very far from our water either. Between picking the leeches out from his sleeves and his boots and cursing their ancestry, the Red-One asked me what I estimated the distance to be; and I told him:

"We have traveled some six hours and we have plied our machetes fast; and the tapir trail, too, saved time. We must have come a full five miles."

And he said:

"It is nothing. Six men to a canoe will bring them over in half a day with plenty of time to stop and rest."

And at that simple saying we laughed again as at a play in the theater; and presently when we wept we picked ourselves out of the water and set to making our way back to our own side of the divide, and as we went we regaled each other with pictures of the surprize that was going to descend up the kingdom of this loud-mouthed King of the Black Water from the neighboring country which Sylvestra had wiped out.

Return along our path which we had cut through the jungle tangle was much faster than coming, and we reached our canoes just in time before the darkness fell like a blanket. We were tired enough, but we wasted no time; for, as the Red-Head remarked, it was just as well not to expect too many favors from Providence; and I quoted our proverb that—

"Providence helps a wise man while the devil destroys a fool."

To which he added a grunt with a tight mouth.

"And Sylvestra surely works under the auspices of the devil."

So we transferred our small gear to the one canoe and set our men immediately to twisting torches of the andiraba bark so that we could travel without waiting for daylight; and the other canoe we left there with instructions to the men to clean a path with their machetes wide enough for the passage of canoes with men carrying them.

And we told them that, when they came to the other side, if by any chance other

Indians should wander up that creek and should hear them chopping, to take them prisoners and to hold them, so that no warning might find its way down to the Manduco camp.

We left no precaution untended, and in three days, going with the current, we were in our own desolated country again, where it was to weep to look at our piles of collected nuts, all lying worthless. But I told my partner:

"Nut for nut and more, belonging to Sylvestra, will be waiting in the Cababuri. Let us make haste and get our men together."

So we called our *ipagê* first to put our plan before him; and he squatted before us wrapped in a shapeless parcel of bark cloth and listened with care, and when we had told him all he said:

"This is a good thing that you do; for under the shadow of the Red *Kariwa* my people here have grown rich. There is not a man now who does not own his own machete or ax. My people are good people. They will fight; and those new ones from the farther creeks are not so bad. I will talk with their *ipagês*. I will also send a word to the *ipagês* of the Cababuri, so that when you come, there will be trouble only with the men from down-river who have followed the shadow of that killer of naked Indians who calls himself the King of the Black Water."

The Red-Head said to me:

"Observe, my friend, how the first thought of this savage is that savage thing, propaganda, of which we were afraid."

But I said—

"There is no cause to fear now."

And to the *ipagê:*

"Old Wise One, that is a good thought you say; but little time for such dealing. Today we gather our men and tomorrow we start; and we shall travel fast."

And he nodded and chuckled and filled his cheek with the *ipadu* and his shrewd face screwed up into a net of wrinkles as he said to me:

"Heh-heh, *Kariwa* knows much that other white men do not know and he believes much; but many things he does not believe. Let it be; make your preparations as swiftly as you may, and I will help to make speed. But when you come to the Cababuri my word will be there before you. Have no fear; it will be a good word."

Well, it could do no very great harm now, even if the old crafty one could work some magic of communication, for we would be right on its heels; and this was no time to be fretting about magic. The only magic that we wanted from the old man was the magic of his name and his influence to help us in getting our people together; and in that matter he proved to be a true wizard.

With each fast canoe that we sent hurrying through all the back creeks and channels to summon our fighting men he sent a whispered word with the headman; and in some, to the more important communities, he sent *ipagatawurumis*, assistant witch-doctors or neophytes of his craft; and the result was that by morning long canoes with six or eight men to each began to arrive and to haul out on the strip of open grass plot in front of our house.

No need to go into the detail of picking our men and explaining what we proposed to do and why, except that we chose as nearly as possible only men who had had some small dealings with trader people and their kind; for it went without saying that not a one who had so dealt but would have a few old scores to pay off; and furthermore, such men would be less afraid of fighting with *blancos*, under which head they would classify all the breeds and mestizo riffraff of Manduco's following.

WE DECIDED to take fifty canoes, reasoning that this was no war that we were about to wage against the whole population of the Cababuri; but a swift raid upon the headquarters of Sylvestra's hireling, and that the only real fighting would be with the chief and his gang. We had no means of knowing how many there might be in that gang; but ours were good men, willing and well fed, and we relied on the merry surprize that we were going to deal out to that ragamuffin crew. Fifty canoes would be enough.

By midday we were ready and the fleet was in the water, waiting the word, when who should appear on the scene but our *ipagê* himself. No furtive wizard now, wrapped in a poncho of beaten *cumaré* bark; but decked out in all the formality of monkey skins and splendid macaw feathers and accompanied by a following of a dozen *ipagatawurumis*.

The old man held his witch-rattle in his

hand; and when he sounded the ceremonial roll upon it, all the chatter and scuffling of the men in the canoes ceased immediately.

Truly did that *ipagê* have a power over them. Every man sat in silence with his paddle held stiffly upright before his face in direct line with the nose and between the eyes so as to ward off any overlaying by witchcraft.

With his eyes the old man gathered them all to him, as it were, and then he broke into a long speech in their own tongue. I could make out but little of it; for who can learn every jungle dialect of the river? Sufficient is the Geral which passes current among all of them. But I could catch a word here and there beside the much mention of *Kariwa* and Red *Kariwa*, and the talk seemed to be that the shadow of the Red *Kariwa* was about to be extended over the whole of Amazonas and what-not.

Apparently everything was very fine and the auspices of the peccary entrails for the land and the caiman guts for the water were the best that had ever been. Much I could not follow at all; but that was the meat of the talk; and when it came to an abrupt end all our men shouted, "*Ulu-lu-lu-lu, awai-angh!*" and they dipped their paddles with a great enthusiasm and were away, leaving us to scuttle after our fleet in our own canoe as best we might and with small dignity for the leaders of an expedition.

"Well," said the Red *Kariwa*, as we began to overtake our men and to get some order into our going, "he sent us off with a blessing anyway."

And so it seemed. We had no trouble of any sort with our men. What we said was done without an argument; which, let me tell you, is not usual when one is convoying some three hundred wild Indians of the community tribes, each member of whom has been accustomed to the right of having his say in council. Nor did we meet with any misfortunes on the road. Our canoes kept together and covered the fifty miles of the big river in a body by dark of night; nor did any one ramble away from the rest to spear fish or any such foolishness.

So the whole fifty of us reached our advance guard on the Castanheira without discovery or mishap. There we found two strange Indians; but they were not by any means prisoners. They had been sent to scout and mark down nut-bearing trees and, as we had thought might be possible, had heard our men; and when they learned who we were they had been glad enough to stay.

For, they said, they received no form of pay in trade-goods for their labor; they were just told to do so and forthwith driven out to do it. The Red-Head and I looked at one another with satisfaction. This was a condition doubtless very unfortunate for the Indians but very fortunate for us.

"That is the Manduco as I know of old," said I. "That is the reason for his success; it is cheaper to beat a man for not working than to pay him for working."

"For a while," said the Red-Head with a hard face. "For a while. But the proof of the gun is in its shooting. We have fifteen hundred men in our Marauia who will fight for us, and how many has he?"

The two Indians, upon being questioned, clicked their tongues and said, promptly, none. If the *blancos* chose to cut one another's throats, what affair was it of Indians? But they could not tell us how many men were in that country.

The Cababuri with its tributary creeks covered a very large district, and they had never had reason to go beyond their own hunting grounds. Their own village was at the joining of this creek, which they called the Maya, with the Cababuri, a day's journey down; and another day's journey down was the *sitio* of the *blancos*.

It was a big *sitio*, they told us. A long mat and thatch house upon posts was at the very edge of the water where it was shallow and wide. There were many rooms in this house and some dozen of the chiefs of the *blancos* lived in it and they tied their *batelãos* to the posts of the house, ready for immediate use.

"The significance of which," grunted the Red-Head, "is that if their treatment should drive the Indians to an uprising they at once can take to their boats. It means also that there will probably be some sort of a guard."

And I said:

"No matter. What are a dozen river-rats?"

But the Indians told us that that was not all. To the back of this long barrack and on either side of the clearing, forming three sides of a square, were other smaller houses in which lived about forty more *blancos*, evil men who carried guns and whips and who went up and down the creeks driving men to labor.

Whereupon the Red-Head grinned and repeated my sentiment.

"No matter. What are fifty river-rats?"

And he asked one more question; this with anxiety.

"What about tagua in this Cababuri country?"

The Indians made mountains with their hands. Tagua was everywhere, they said, and at the *sitio* was a great shed, already piled to the roof with it.

The Red-One laughed then free from care.

"*Então vamonos*," he cried. "Let us be gone. Those machines back home will be beginning to be hungry."

So we gave the word and our men cut short poles and lashed them with *liana* ropes athwart their canoes so that they could carry them with comfort over their shoulders; and the portage commenced.

Never had such a journey been in these jungles before. A raiding party transporting its canoes overland was a new history. Indians had made war upon each other throughout the ages, of course. But they went always from one creek to the next and it was at the creek-mouths that the fighting took place.

Why? *Carramba*, because such was the custom and because so had their grandfathers done; and an Indian, if he ever explored profitless ground and chanced upon a new creek, lacked the incentive to stir his wit to wander and his ambition to go and find out where that water might lead to. Doubtless to other Indians, would be his reasoning, and who could know whether those might be friendly or hostile?

Much chattering passed among our men at this extraordinary procedure and much cheerful prediction that the *Kariwas* who were clever enough to invent such a plan must of necessity win over those others who made fortifications only at the mouth of their water.

Which was not so far from true.

Half a day sufficed to transport our fleet; and we planned to travel well into the night and then to lay up and to travel again the next day, so that we would come upon the *sitio* by the following night. Our first lap then took us to the village of those two Indians at the meeting of the creeks, where they assured us their people would be friendly to us and would be glad to give food and shelter to anybody who went to make war upon those *blancos* who oppressed them.

But it is my observation that only a fool believes everything that any Indian says. So I omitted no precaution, but sent three canoes to keep going before ever we landed and to keep a guard in the creek below the village to see that no messenger should slip down quietly after our arrival under cover of the night.

YET they seemed to be friendly enough. An *ipagê* met us at the beach with three befeathered ceremonial spear-holders behind him, indicating that we were welcome to make the visit to the council-house and to break the cassava bread into the chili sauce; which was surprizing; for it was to be expected that these people would be suspicious of all white men.

As a matter of policy we gave the *ipagê* a machete, thinking to surprize and delight him. He was pleased enough, and succeeded very soon in cutting his hand as he tested the edge; but by no means was he surprized.

"It is true then," said he. "These are *Kariwas* who give honor where honor is due. Let the warriors from the Marauia land. Cassava bread is ready and the hunters have brought in many monkeys and pigs."

The Red-Head chuckled.

"Our cunning old Wise One seems to have made good his boast," said he. "He must have telegraphed. Yet we heard no drumming."

And I said:

"What matter how? The point is that they seem to know our mission and are well disposed."

And so our fleet landed and found a feast waiting. They would have danced and yelled all night in the moonlight. But we went to the *ipagê* and told him that our men had traveled fast and far and that there would be men's work to be done tomorrow night after another long day's paddle. So the *fiesta* was cut short and we drove them to sleep so that we might start fresh with the morning.

Which we did; though the Red-One and I chafed under the delay while we entered into an argument with the *ipagê* and the chief councilors of the village. They had had it all made up that some of their young men should come with us. For, they said, those *blancos* had descended upon them like the *jurupari*, the evil spirit of the jungles itself, and had driven them to labor without even

a pretense of compensation, the only inducement being death or maiming if they refused; and they produced men without ears to prove it.

The Red-Head was ablaze with indignation; but none of this was anything new to me. It was the old story of rubber over again; only these people were lucky that tagua had not been exploited fifteen years ago when the country was first opening up, when there were real bad-men on the rivers. But we would have none of their proffered help. No, we said. We could control our own men when it came to fighting; but what did we know of these strangers?

So we sped on down alone, and as we went we apportioned out our men under leaders whom we could rely upon; so many to each hut and fifty in reserve to rush in and help where they might be most needed; and we explained to each leader that we were attacking, not naked Indians, but *blancos* armed with rifles; and that our plan was to rely upon speed and surprize to come as near as we could to the *sitio* without being found out; and then each group, without confusion, was to rush upon its appointed hut and to capture or bind—or, if necessary, knock on the head—every *blanco* in the place.

Particularly was it to be seen that no house would be left untended to; for two or three men from a single house, armed with rifles, would make a terrible havoc amongst us. What further precaution could we take? What could we think of that we had not done? Nothing. And the Red-Head commented then, wrinkling his nose and stretching his shoulders—

"Guess we'll put up a good scrap anyway."

As if that was all that was to be desired.

"Never fear," I told him. "You will know that you have been in a fight. I know those fellows; they are hard-bitten men, one and all; and they will imagine, of course, that it is an uprising of their impressed labor, and knowing what will be in store for them, will fight like devils."

Nothing further could be done till we reached our objective, except the one precaution that when we met a few canoes on the river we put them behind us; and we ourselves, paddling six men or more to a canoe, were not going to be outstripped by any lone messenger. We had brought an Indian with us who knew the river, and when he told us that another two hours of good paddle work would bring us to the *sitio* we lay up and rested and waited for the sunset.

Sunset on the Equator is coincident with moonrise; and with that we started again. Keeping late hours is a privilege of men in civilized places where light is available; so, since in the jungle the only light is lanterns and nothing can be done by lantern light, one simply goes to bed to rise again with daylight. In two hours the *sitio* would be asleep.

And so it was when we arrived. Dugout canoes—even fifty of them—can be as silent as spirits; and like ghosts out of the night we swooped down the black water, our individual canoe some fifty meters in the lead, till a wider place showed us the outlines of houses against the sky.

It was as we had been told. A long barrack of split-cane matting with a wide veranda hung at the very water's edge, and behind it, fringing a clearing of a hundred meters square, the yellow roofs of other huts made square black shadows. Tied to the veranda posts were some fifteen big *batelãos*, and smaller canoes nosed the bank between them.

The silence of the night jungle hung over everything; which means that the croaks and the squeaks and the whistles of all the night creatures blended into the low hum that was so silent that any new sound—such as the click of a paddle against a gunwale—would immediately waken one. This was our most critical moment. A single light showed; a lantern suspended from a peg in the end post of the veranda nearest to us, and beneath it leaned a still figure wrapped in a poncho to his very hat brim against the mosquitoes.

"That will be the boat guard," the Red-Head whispered to me; and he raised a paddle in a signal which could be seen by those behind; and immediately the following canoes swept in to the shore at the very edge of the clearing and our men began to hop out and steal forward in their appointed directions.

We went on to deal with the guard.

WE HAD hoped to find him asleep; but he must have been alert enough; for he heard the soft swish of our canoe as it beached twenty paces from him, and he pulled the poncho from his face.

"*Hola! Quem vai?*" he called gruffly.

"*Quem que Eu mesmo?*" I answered quickly as I stepped from the canoe. "Who but I myself, *amigo?*"

"*Diabo!*" he growled as he reached for the lantern. "Who the —— thinks himself so important that everybody should know his voice?"

I laughed softly.

"And yet," said I, "you should know my voice very well, Rodriguez the One-Eared."

As indeed he should; for it was through a little business that we had together that gained his name. He called quickly on the name of a holy one and raised the lantern to my face; and the picture of him there, with unbelief in his eyes and consternation in his fallen jaw, was a joy to behold. But the fellow had his wits and he was quick.

"——!" he swore. "It is that devil of a Theophilo!"

And with the words he snatched a pistol from somewhere about his person and leveled it. For an instant I saw its muzzle between my own two eyes and so close that I squinted at it; and in that same swift instant the thought came to me that this time I had let myself be caught unawares to my own immediate undoing. Almost I could see the flame shoot into my face. And then the long arm of the Red-Head licked over my shoulder and struck.

With the empty fist it was, after the North American manner which we of the South do not seem to be able to master. But the sudden speed and force of the blow were like the stroke of the great anaconda of the swamps. The man's head thudded against the veranda post and he fell limp, the lantern falling from his hand into the water at his feet.

"*Picaro,*" I said to my overzealous friend. "You might have hit him half as hard. That has jarred the whole house."

And from above a voice demanded sulkily what in the name of Beelzebub was the matter. Immediately I swore, abusing the ancestry of the lantern, and growled that it had fallen into the water and that I must come up after another; and forthwith I began tramping up the rough ladder with a great show of grumbling assurance; behind me the Red-Head and a dark silent file of naked Indians.

The subterfuge gained us the veranda; and there we were faced with a dilemma. It was lined across and across with hammocks strung from door to post and back again. And in the shadow under the low roof it was suddenly pitch-dark.

"We must crawl under and cut all the ropes at once," the Red-Head whispered in my ear.

But the man at the farther end who had awakened had seen our forms in the moonlight as we topped the ladder and he demanded to know who was this great figure that accompanied Rodriguez. I was racking my wits for a reply, when away from one corner of the clearing a rifle sounded; and then what further use of concealment?

I hurled myself upon the nearest hammock. The Red-Head, leaping, flying all a-spraddle, passed over me and landed upon two at once; and I saw dimly that his weight broke both ropes. Then a rush of hard, naked feet swept over all of us.

Well, who can describe a fight in which one had been furiously engaged oneself? I know only that an appalling shouting and cursing suddenly filled the air that had been so quiet. Blows thudded. Men yelled. Indians whistled shrilly as they fought. Men grunted and strained body to body and called upon each other to summon help from the other huts.

And all in the infernal darkness of the shadow, I choked my man and scrambled among a million legs to find another, distinguishing friend from foe only by the fact that our Indians wore no clothes. Wherever I found a garment I hit it; or, if I found momentary room, I drove my knee into its stomach. But mostly I fought rolling on the floor; for I was much hampered by reason of the fact that the veranda was built of nothing better than round canes lashed together with liana vines, and my boots slipped foully upon their shiny surfaces.

Presently a flame stabbed in the dark and a gun roared. I ducked, and with the same instinct so did the man with whom I grappled. The move threw us against the frail veranda rail; the man crashed through and fell to the ground and I lost him. Some one shrieked piercingly with each breath. Men yelled more hoarsely. And then the swish and thuck of machetes began.

It was then that my heart stopped. Machetes swinging in the dark in the hands of savage men! That was a business to be well out of. Who would strike whom was a matter for guessing; and it came to me with

a qualm that I, like my opponents, wore clothes.

It was Providence that came to our help again. The fight in some way or other heaved and smashed its way to one end of the veranda. I had thought that we had detailed but thirty of our men to follow us; but there seemed to be a hundred. The press of naked bodies about me was so great that I could do no more than hug my man of the moment and curse him.

And then the combined weight and the plunging of many bodies proved too much for the flimsy building. The veranda posts first began to sag in the moist ground, and, once started, they leaned drunkenly. Struggling men rolled to add to the weight.

The building teetered. And then with a smashing and a splintering the whole of that end of the barrack lurched over into the creek; and there we were up to our waists in the water mixed up with *batelãos* and canoes and débris. But, thank the saints, at last in the moonlight where we could at least see.

I found myself with two ruffians in my arms who buffeted and bit at me; but, happily, thanks to the surprize of having been caught in their hammocks, without weapons.

I wrapped an arm round the neck of each and threw my weight upon them to choke them or to force their heads under and drown them. An Indian youth scuttered to my assistance over floating wreckage like a salamander; and then for the first time I was able to turn my mind to an observance of the rest of the fight.

Among the other huts of the clearing a great yelling was going on and now and then the bang of a gun; and it came to me then that during the fighting in the veranda I had heard other shots from that direction; though many less now than before. Among the yells of our men I could distinguish other shouts and shrieks upon the name of the holy ones; and it was a much needed encouragement to know that those scoundrels would not yell so unless hard beset.

I was in poor condition to observe, however; for in spite of the sinewy Indian lad who helped me, our two fellows fought like imps of the pit, and like river-rats that they were, they would not drown. And furthermore, my sight was veiled by a constant wetness which, when I had wiped away a dozen times, I discovered to be my own blood from a gash in my head that hung over in a three-cornered flap like a rent that one has made in one's clothing on a nail.

Yet the blinding was not such that I did not snatch a glimpse of the Red-Head every now and then as he roared up and down in the mêlée, and I knew that so far he was safe.

Near us a great man stood up to his knees in the water surrounded by a horde of Indians who bayed at him and whom he kept at their distance by swinging a rifle-barrel from which the butt had been smashed; a terrible weapon in the hands of a strong man.

"To me!" he kept shouting. "To me! Must I win this fight alone?"

It was Manduco, the pirate king himself, and a brave enough fight he was making. Every now and then one of his sweeping blows would fell an overbold Indian, and the man would drop into the water, crushed. Myself, I was in no condition to get at him, but I heard a great voice shouting in reply.

"I'm coming. Just a minute, man-killer, till I deal with this rat."

It was the Red-Head; and in a moment he came into my line of sight, plunging through the shallows. The Indians who bayed the great fellow shouted the name of the Red *Kariwa* as one might have shouted the name of El Cid and made way for him. He charged on with the ferocity of a red bull in the plaza and Manduco shouted again and braced himself for a devastating blow.

"*Deus da Graca!*" I said to myself. "Weaponless, he will be crushed like a granadilla!"

But the Red-One, for all his impetuosity, never lost his wit. With supreme cunning, just as Manduco swung his murderous weapon with both hands, he checked himself in full stride for the smallest fraction of a moment till the rifle-barrel had started on its terrible sweep, and then he leapt, flying, as before, in his extraordinary manner, to clutch at the man's thighs.

Manduco was a powerful man; strong enough to recover his balance from his great swing and to strike swiftly on the return. The blow fell on the Red-Head's shoulder. But he was already in mid-air. The weight of the blow was insufficient to stop that flying bulk; though it sufficed to swerve it from its path.

I ceased to breathe. But the good God was with us. One long clutching arm of

the Red-One's reached Manduco's waist and held. His flying body swung round in an arc, and the swing of it whirled Manduco off his feet. And then the Indians yelled again and rushed in like hounds and blotted them from view.

And then more Indians began to arrive from all sides. The night just spewed yelling Indians till I found myself most welcomely relieved from my own struggle; and that seemed to be about the last of it. The fighting and the splashing quieted down almost as suddenly as it had started, and I was able to notice then that the other huts, too, were very quiet.

My thought was for the Red-Head. But above the dizziness in my own head I heard his voice shouting orders, and I was glad enough to flounder to dry land and to leave him to build order out of this confusion.

Which presently began to be. Our leaders took their directions and led their men off on their various assignments of securing prisoners and guarding against a counter surprize and so forth. Though there remained an uncontrollable element that leapt and danced in the middle of the clearing like all the monkeys of the world in the moonlight and would not be quieted.

"*Caralhos!*" I said to myself. "I had thought that we brought three hundred men; and of those, some have been detailed to sundry duties and some have fallen; but as many again prance and howl in the clearing."

And then I began to notice, and I caught my breath and called one of our own men whom I recognized and questioned him. And then it came out that we had not been alone in that fight. Some of the bolder spirits of that village had quietly followed us; and when they saw how the fight was being assured in our favor they rushed in to pay off the many things that had been accumulating against this gang; and now they were celebrating.

Enlightenment came to me, and I understood then about those shrieks upon the holy names that had sounded from the huts, and I bethought me of our prisoners. Forgetting my own buzzing head, I hurried to find the Red-One. He knew about it already.

"Yes," he said. "Some of the men whom we captured with our veranda gang are safely trussed. But the others—" His face remained stern, but he shrugged—and winced immediately with the pain of his shoulder—"well, they brought it upon themselves by their treatment of these people."

"Manduco?" I asked.

He shrugged again painfully.

"I haven't had time to see," he said. "But I understand they've torn him into little bits."

I remained silent. Not that I had any qualms about those fellows. The rivers were well rid of such ruffians. But to us jungle men who live among these Indians there comes a feeling of a queer discomfort when one learns that quite a crowd of *blancos* has been blotted out by them. Yet it was foolish of me. It has been my observation that Indians, like children and animals, grow as they are trained. So I, too, shrugged and crossed myself.

"God rest them," said I. "But we have seen how they have handled these people and may the Green One take me if I can feel a grief on their account."

WELL, what more is to relate? We found this Cababuri to be a much bigger territory than we had thought; and we found, too, that Sylvestra had spent money like water to assure himself of a corner in the *tagua* business. Under this forced labor that Manduco was so good at exacting, sheds had been built at suitable points on all the back creeks; tools, equipment, boats, everything was there; paths had even been cut through the jungles; all waiting to go into monster production with the opening of the season.

So I left the Red-Head up there to build order into our new territory, at which work he is a very wizard; for, as he maintains with unshakable faith, the business college of his home town taught him that the first requirement of a business is organization.

I brought down that first shedful of tagua to Santa Isabel; a full load for the river steamer; sufficient and over sufficient to keep those tyrannous machines from starving to death till we should be ready to send out more. The steamboat men looked at me with wonder and told me that they had understood from stories that had been current in Manaos that we had gone out of business and that shipments of tagua in future would be from Sylvestra's man,

Manduco, the King of the Rio Negro. I laughed and told them:

"My friends, you will presently hear more stories from certain would-be hard river-men who will be coming down after they have labored a little for the good of their souls. You may believe such of them as you choose. But it is time that even you people of Manaos should begin to understand that Theophilo of the Upper Rivers and Peloroxo the Red-Head are not men who go easily out of business. And you are mistaken; the name of the King of the Black Water is not Manduco, Sylvestra's man, but Peloroxo the Red-Head who is no man's man."

With which I left them mystified. But I fear me that I was overhasty about that title of King. For that Red-Head is a fool. I told him:

"Look you now, my friend. We have a country here as big as your home State, and we have, with our own and these new ones whom you will organize, a force of at least four thousand fighting men—more than the whole constabulary of the state of Amazonas. We control the river. Let us therefore secede and make our own treaties with the government at Manaos."

And he—his eyes danced at the thought as he rolled it over in his mind, and he grinned and swore by Saint Golly that that would be a great adventure. It was a pain to him to let go of that thought. But his prejudices are as ingrained as those of a missionary or of a worshiper of beetles. He became serious and said to me:

"My good friend, the thought is a temptation for the sheer fun of it. But it is experience, as you yourself have taught me, that makes no mistakes. Back home we have had experience that secession is not so good and that kings are not so good. Therefore go you to Manaos and talk with our friends and bully some of those *politicos* and tell them that my demand is to be appointed *Agente dos Indios* for all the river in place of the agent who is dead; and then we can twist the tails of some of those trader fellows who swindle them. They are good children, these Indians; and like children they must be looked after."

So, since that flaming head of his can be turned no more than the channel of the Rio Negro, here I am on a double mission. One is to buy trade-goods to take back as compensation for the families of those of our men who have been killed and to pay an advance of a few things to our new people who have nothing at all; and another is to tell those *politicos* that if that commission of *agente* is not made out quickly we will come down one of these days with five hundred canoesful of blow-gun men and will talk to them.

And I have a third small hope; and that is that I may perhaps meet that Sylvestra knave in the street; though I fear me that he will keep himself carefully in his house. So I must nail up this placard upon the doorpost of the cathedral where all may read. It is from the Red-Head and is very polite. It sends greeting to the high-born mestizo and thanks him for the several thousands of milreis that were spent and for all the work that his hirelings put in for the opening up of the new tagua grounds of the Cababuri, and it requests him to be good enough to go away from the state of Amazonas before the Red-Head shall be less busy and shall have time to visit Manaos.

Which I think the mestizo will do quickly. So, after all why should I worry whether that Red-Head will take the name of king or no. He has the substance; and there is no one on the rivers who will argue with us now—or for that matter, neither, I think, is there any in Manaos City.

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

YOU will remember Comrade Necker's objection to a statement in a letter from Negley Farson concerning his small-boat trip down the Danube. I did, after all, send Mr. Necker's letter to Mr. Farson and after months the following reply reached me:

Brusa, Turkey-in-Asia.

It gives me great pleasure to answer Mr. Necker's letter. It is a perfectly fair kick and deserves a fair answer; so, as I have a great deal of respect for a man of Mr. Necker's years and experience, I hope that he will not take offense at anything that I say. After all, we are talking around the Camp-Fire—where we don't have to be too ladylike, do we?

IN THE first place it never occurred to me for a moment that any one would interpret my sentence "it's no good for a craft of any draft whatever" to mean that steamers never went down the Danube. I was talking about cruising. But as Mr. Necker has galloped off to the tune of four very interesting pages with this misunderstanding I will have to chase after him. I repeat: "The Danube is no good for a craft of any draft whatever."

The simplest proof of this is the fact that there aren't any on it. If Mr. Necker can show me one sailing yacht or any pleasure launch, drawing 2½ feet, anywhere in the 1,435 miles of Danube between Kelhiem and Galatz I will eat my hat—and the boat.

I tried to buy a sailing craft on the Danube, as my original intention was to start my trip from Vienna. This is one answer I got from a certain Consulate there:

"In reply this Consulate begs to inform you that boats such as you describe are not used in or near Vienna as the current of the Danube near Vienna is almost six miles per hour, thus making sailing impossible."

I LEAVE it to yachtsmen what a six-mile current means. And this is near Vienna, where the Danube is quite wide. In the thing which Mr. Necker speaks of as a "canal" in the Iron Gates the speed of the current is from 12 to 16 feet per second

—and the British monitor, the *Glowworm* got stymied half-way up it, couldn't go either forward or astern, and had to hold down her valves to get a high enough head of steam to struggle out of it! It was a question whether she would go up or blow up!

It takes a special towing steamer, pulling itself up on a cable from 1½ to 2 hours, to go up this two-kilometer stretch. The Germans used locomotives to tow ships through it during the war. And if Mr. Necker had ever gone down below Orsova he would know that these dreaded Iron Gates are not one-half so sticky as the 65 miles of rapids and submerged ledges below Drencova. As a matter of fact, I consider the "Shachlet" by Vilshofen one of the nastiest parts of the river.

THE trouble is that this discussion brings up the old and time honored argument between the small-boat man and the hand on a steamboat. Mr. Necker, in his comfortable position of cabin-boy, and in the four short summers that he acted as "Steuermann," never got any real conception of what the Danube can do to a person. These steamers—and they are not much over five feet draft—run along beats that are as well known, to their pilots, as their own back yard. And these pilots are marvelous. The "Steuermann" cons the wheel in order of their commands. But I would like to ask Mr. Necker a question such as this (this is in a 2½-ton, dead weight, yawl, with a motor that can't kick it along faster than five miles per hour):

What would he do if dusk caught him just above the Schachlet at Vilshofen? Which side of the first rocks would he take? (There are no buoys.) And having piled her up on a pinnacle in a seven-mile current, what would he do next?

Remember that this is a sharp rock; it's dead under your craft—and you can't touch bottom anywhere with your boat-hook.

Or how would he anchor at night in a seven-mile current? He would get out of the ships' channel, of course. Yes, he would work toward the shore. But which shore? Sometimes the ships' channel almost scrapes the banks. Well, he would prod about with the boat-hook till he found four feet or so. He would feel for safe water. Good—he "feels" and then lets go his anchor—and then he pays out—and crashes stern first into a ledge he has just slid past. Now, would he pull a 2½-ton craft up against a seven-mile current or would he start his motor again—and lose his propeller?

MR. NECKER says there are four places which might have given me trouble, but that I did not mention them. I did not mention them for the simple reason that I was not trying to "impress" anybody. I have not got the copy of my letter with me—the crew has gone home to London and taken our log and all papers with her—but I think that I said: "Nothing dangerous, of course—but dashed inconvenient when you go smack on a sand-bar in mid-stream."

As a matter of fact, the crew and I took *Flame* down the 1,535 miles of the Danube from Kelhiem to Sulina on the Black Sea without ever once taking a pilot. I feel that in justice to the crew I ought to mention that now. The crew is my wife, a girl, and although she was born in India and has seen her share of adventure she is still—only a woman. When we piled *Flame* up—which we did more than once—she had to haul and shove just like a good one. And one of the worst stretches we had was when in the middle of a perfectly fine strip of smooth running river we ran *Flame* into a "pocket" of sand-bars. On that day I spent about an hour with my shoulders under our bow, and engine going full out astern, and just shoved there and sobbed—because we couldn't budge *Flame* one inch. It was Crew, suddenly turning into an almost desperate Hercules, with the boat-hook which added the last touch to at last get her clear.

As to the loneliness of the Danube—the Trobriands would not seem desolate to the passers-by on some yacht. And Mr. Necker has never been below Orsova, so he does not know anything about the swamps of Roumania or the Bulgarian shore or the last 600 miles of the Balkans.

THAT'S done—and now to chat. I have a most intense admiration for the German, Austrian, and Hungarian water-men. I found them as fine a lot as any men I have met. I have talked freely with Mr. Necker, because I am sure that he understands. And it might interest him to know that I began this letter in Asia Minor, carried on through Turkey, Bulgaria, Jugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, Germany and am now putting this last word in Belgium. I passed through Mr. Necker's beloved Ratisbon and I send a greeting to him from it—and the noble old Danube.

We will not discuss the relative values of the Danube and Mississippi as neither Mr. Necker nor I have sailed our own boat down it—and we had better leave that to some one who has.

Salute to Camp-Fire.—NEGLEY FARSON.

AN APPEAL from one of our writers' brigade for data to be used in a future story. I remember the days when our sailors were excluded from some theaters but am hazy as to details. Seems to me that on some occasions they were excluded for no other reason than that they were sailors. It's well that those shameful days are past.

Newark, New Jersey.

I'm doing a story in which I want to use an incident which occurred some years ago, back about 1911, in which two Navy men were refused admittance to a theater in Boston for not having collars and ties on. I recollect that the story was afloat on the foolish decks of the old battleship *Ohio*, I being one of her most foolish fools at the time. Naturally using such an incident gives rise to the apprehension, "Who'll believe it?" In anticipation of this, some time ago I wrote to four old shipmates, three of whom have replied saying that they remember the incident well enough but not particulars—that is, the name of the theater, who the gobs were, to what ship attached, etc. One says he thinks the jacks were from the *Nebraska*, which seems likely, for she was there in the navy-yard with us at the time.

Could some old-timer give me any dope on that affair? I don't have to have it, of course. In this yarn I'm not mentioning any names. But I'd like to have it, if obtainable, for the purpose of self-defense, in case some one should later climb my frame. Best luck—CHAS. V. FISCHER.

A LETTER from a comrade in Haiti, commenting on one of our stories by T. S. Stribling, and Mr. Stribling's reply:

Port au Prince, Haiti.

As an admirer of *Adventure*, and always an interested reader of Camp-Fire, I wish to make quite a few remarks concerning "The Governor of Cap Haitien," by T. S. Stribling.

MR. STRIBLING seems to derive much satisfaction from ridiculing Americans in the tropics, especially the West Indies. All of us down here are doing simply what Mr. Stribling does when he sells a story, trying to earn a living. As for the class of Americans that I have met in the tropics, a cross-section of American life anywhere in the United States would show the same extremes and means. That's a general complaint I have to make concerning all of Mr. Stribling's stories. Now for the particular story.

On pages 6 and 7, and other places, where *Poggioli* first meets *Clay*, Mr. Stribling has *Clay* talk like a stage Southerner or darky, and also makes him pop off some remarks about treaty officials being sent to keep Haitians in their places. They are here to keep men like *Vauquière* in their places, and to keep their fingers out of the custom house coffers. However, the record speaks for itself and does not need an advocate. Would remark in passing that when Mr. Maumus, from Louisiana, and collector of customs at Port au Prince, left Haiti, the Haitians regretted his going exceedingly and offered many testimonials for the value of his services to Haiti.

Poggioli, speaking French, would not have been able to converse easily with uneducated Haitians, if indeed he would have understood them at all. The Haitians have many of the French words but lack the music. Creole (Haitian) is composed of words from several languages, mostly French however, but they have a characteristic way of shortening words that is very puzzling to one who speaks French only. For example, (an easy word for a French-speaking person to catch), they make "vle" (pronounced vley) out of "voulez." Some of the words are English, some are Spanish, and some, to my notion, must be African. A Haitian may say "aussi," but he prefers the English "too." Then, in speaking Creole, a Haitian, (especially speaking to a "blanc") sounds as if he were grumbling about something.

On page 11, Mr. Stribling calls the Haitian soldiers, rurales. The armed force of Haiti is the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, and the individuals are gendarmes.

On page 12, he says that it will take two hours to go from Cap Haitien to Le Citadel, in carriages. It took my party, in a Ford with a fast driver, one and one-half hours to make Milot, at the foot of the hill, and we did not hesitate on the road. At the foot of the hill it is necessary to take horses, and it is a two-hour climb for horses. I had the largest horse I have seen in Haiti and passed two or three parties on the trail and did not stop once, and it took me that long. The road from Cap Haitien to Milot is magnificent for about five miles and then is only a trail through thorns and small streams and slows a car down very much. Also he mentions the carriage climbing up the hill. True, he says that the carriage did not go the entire distance, but a carriage can not even begin the ascent. Only in rare cases is there room for two horses abreast, and any one wishing to pass another on the trail must pass at one of these places.

SAME page, he states that *Boisrond's* wife speaks deplorable Creole. I speak deplorable Creole, but all Haitians speak good Creole. Creole is a language and is capable of development.

Page 13: he says that they halted under a banyan tree. I have never seen a banyan tree in Haiti, and Mr. Barbour, the A. A. expert on tropical forestry, says he has seen none, but there is a tree near Cap Haitien that looks as if it may belong to the banyan family.

Page 14: the Haitian word for small houses or huts, is "caille," pronounced Ky. "Yaqua" is Dominican, I have been told. Also while some Spanish is spoken at the Cap and Fort Liberté, I doubt if any one calls a hut a "yaqua."

Page 16: the Haitians did not design Le Citadel, as *Doctor Vauquière* states. The designers and superintendents of construction were European engineers. Of course, the Haitians did the heavy work.

I have stated above that a carriage could not wind upward toward Le Ferrière. Also, where Mr. Stribling says they first saw the castle, it can not be seen.

PAGE 16: he says one can see the blur that is Port au Prince from the Citadel. It is about 160 miles away, with five or six ranges of hills between, some over 4,000 feet high, and higher than the hill on which the Citadel stands.

Page 16: I saw no cannon around the parapet. The cannon are in the building, with several stories above them. Also the walls pierced by the cannon ports that I saw were about four feet thick. Some of the bastions are very thick (about 15 ft.). Also the place is made with small stones, not of wonderful size as Mr. Stribling seems to indicate on page 16, column 2, lines 8 and 9.

Page 24 and throughout: he makes Haitian peasants talk in American minstrel negro talk. I don't get his point there. The Haitians are uneducated, but I wouldn't go so far as to translate their Creole (which they use grammatically, such grammar as they have) into minstrel talk.

Pages 28 and 29: no Haitian would talk to a strange white man as these two "soldats" talked to *Poggioli*. It simply isn't done by Haitians. They will hardly do more than answer questions if you can "*parle Creole enpil*."

Page 34, last two lines of column one: "bon bagaille," pronounced "bon" (as spelled) "bagay," first "a" rather broad, meaning (literally) good thing, good stuff. This is Marine Corps Creole, but is positively not used by the Haitians. It is very popular with the marines.

The above are merely the high spots. I can cite illustrations to amplify the above headings, but it would be only taking up unnecessary time and space.

I RECKON from the above that you think I am a crank, but I hope not. Haiti is an interesting country and seems to be coming as a locale for fiction. If so, let us have facts about it, not dreams. It exactly fits the old hymn about Ceylon, "Where only man is vile." If misrepresented, the consequences may be serious, as I can't imagine a more

horrible place for a white man "on the beach." And if any impression is given that it is a "South Sea Island Paradise" we will have many down-and-outers here.

I have been here over two years, have about 50 Haitians under me and see a white man, when I am working (not at night or after working hours), only two or three times a week, and I don't know anything about Haitians. Always something new coming up.—P. E. Rooney.

My dear Mr. Rooney:—Your very interesting letter concerning my story "Governor of Cap Haitien" was forwarded to me and I take pleasure in answering it.

I am very well aware that Americans in the tropics are very like Americans at home. I am certainly never guilty of discriminating between Americans in these two localities. If you should read a book I wrote called "Birthright" which was published some time ago by Century Co. and a book which will be published March 5 by Doubleday Page called "Teeftallow," you would see at once that I see Americans in one place about the same as anywhere else. I do draw some slight differences between the "Yankee" and the "Southerner" but these are differences founded purely on geography and politics; fundamentally I always feel them the same.

And my job, Mr. Rooney, is to pick out the droller side of Americans and point it out. You spoke of working at your job in the tropics; well, I'm working at my job in attempting to portray the American idea. After all, I think you yourself would agree Americans are not perfect creatures in or out of the tropics—and if they were wouldn't that be all the more odd and amusing? Can you imagine anything droller than a perfect man in a world like ours. Christ, for example, you see what happened to Him. Just fancy a lot of human beings swarming to kill the one perfect man in it. Certainly that is a comedy worthy of Aristophanes.

NOW the real point of my story had very little to do with Hatien Creole or the distances from Cap Haitien to the Citadel. This is the gist of it: the fact that any of the major powers in controlling any inferior people must inevitably destroy their folk-culture and mold them into their own image or destroy them completely. Any small subjugated folk, or commercially controlled folk, is an example of this. Only enormous masses of population such as India and China are able to maintain their personalities against their rulers; and, of course, China is still supposed to rule herself.

This thing seems a tragic thing to me, but utterly inevitable. There is simply no human way, with human nature standing as it is, to prevent it. The smaller human cultures are going the way of the bison, the dodo, the walrus and the seal; and how much possible enrichment of art, music and letters must perish with them.

IN REGARD to language; it is absolutely necessary in stories to have folk-talk. I wanted to suggest an uneducated negro talking. The analogy between good French and Haitian Creole suggests good English and ordinary Southern negro talk. This dialect, which is throughly understood North and South gets across the impression of a shambling negro, and is the most image-forming thing to use that I could think of. I know a Swedish gentleman translated a story of mine into Swedish. It had a Southern dialect in it and as he had no corresponding dialect in his own country, he simply rendered it as bad grammar.

One goes about these things the best one can. They are problems in impression, not in rendering of detail.

In regard to the Spanish names in my story: When I wrote this I had just returned from a long stay in Spanish-American countries and the Spanish names for "rurales" and "yagua" etc., simple meant those things for me. Sorry I didn't have the French or Creole term for them.

I CAN assure you, Mr. Rooney, that I never heard of Mr. Maumus of Louisiana when I wrote the story, and there was nothing personal whatever in the character of *Clay*. I picked *Clay* from the South because that would be an interesting human relation. I made *Clay* talk, as you say, "like a stage Southerner" because American dramatists and American fiction writers, both listening to one sort of dialect, have agreed that is as near as they can come toward reproducing it.

I am a Southerner myself. I was copying a dialect I have heard all my life and continually speak myself. If it happens to coincide with some dramatist's notion of Southern dialect, I am not surprized.

NOW Mr. Rooney this letter, as you see, is not at all an attempt at refutation of the points you have pointed out. You are doubtless quite correct. You are concerned with the smaller phases of the story, I with what I may call the larger phase. How about letting it be a fair trade between us? I'll agree to all your detail if you'll agree with the spiritual implications the story contains. If the next time you are out working the Hatians on your plantation you look at one of them and think, "Now there may be something under that woolly pate which, if it had ten thousand years to flower, might produce an analogue to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony." And indeed it very well might.

And then you will have fulfilled your part of our contract.—T. S. Stribling.

All of these *Poggioli* tales should have been marked by us as "Off the Trail" stories, for each of them was a study of various human conditions and relations, presented through the medium of satire, as well as a perfectly good detective yarn on the face of it. We aim for accuracy of fact in our stories and Mr. Rooney was quite justified in pointing out that in many details it has not been attained in "The Governor of Cap Haitien." Mr. Stribling was equally justified in saying he was not concerned with these details. The blame comes home to us of the staff.

What most writers strive to do in their stories is entirely compatible with accuracy of detail. What Mr. Stribling is striving to do, at least in his satires, is not.

AT CAMP-FIRE, as you know, we rather keep away from poetry. Not because we have anything against poetry, but because any time we let down the bars to one poem we get deluged with them beyond any possibility of using them all.

But I think you'll agree that here is cause for an exception. It is not essentially a question of a poem but of paying our respects to the highest possible type of courage. And the man who showed that courage was a member of our writers' brigade.

His name will be carved in the wood of the Memorial Tablet erected by readers, writers and staff to those who, having helped in the making of our magazine, have gone from among us, but the name of Charles Campbell Jones will be carved deeper and more permanently in the hearts of those who knew him.

We follow Camp-Fire custom in rising to wish him Godspeed over the Long Trail.

Del Mar, California.

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN: No doubt you recall Charles Campbell Jones, who used to write for *Adventure* occasionally some years ago. But Charley was such a reticent chap, so far as his own troubles were concerned, that I don't know if you know his story.

SOME of us were talking about deeds of courage the other day and agreed that Charley Jones was the bravest man we ever knew. He was so brave that he fooled even himself, or at least never admitted anything to himself which might weaken his assault on life. I loved him, and believe he reciprocated. One night when we had talked till past midnight in very close fellowship, I told him, with great admiration, that I could see through his mask, but he convincingly maintained that he wasn't wearing any.

When he was terribly mangled he was working as a block-signal electrician out in New Mexico, so far from a hospital that they took him all the way to Kansas City before a surgeon got to him. It was too late then. His terribly smashed insides had grown together, or something like that. Not only were his hopes cut off but he lived in continual pain which often amounted to real agony. Yet one night his mother told me, with happy tears in her eyes, "I don't know how he does it, but Charley has made himself happy, made us all happy. He's proved a man can be captain of his soul."

When he was injured his father was in feeble health, his sister too young to help the family, his mother needed to care for him and the father and sister. So he continued to be the strength and hope of the family, for ten years. Then the sister was old enough to take up the burden—and Charley laid it down. Glad did he live in spite of terrible misfortune, and never admitted once that he would be glad to die.

I went from Charley's bedside to the World War, where in trenches and hospitals I saw courage do all courage can. Then I went to Mexico, where I found a goodly fellowship of adventurers. I never saw Charley again. But he never leaves my mind for long at a time and always I think of him as the bravest man I ever met. He possessed my mind to such an extent yesterday that I could do nothing else but take a day off and write his story, which I inclose.—LEE SHIPPEY.

One of the Bravest

Courage? I've seen plenty—drenched men in muddy trenches
Sneering down the wet wind which brought a skim of ice;
Seen them moving from "support" over proof their lives were short,
Ground all sprawled with twisted dead, buddies who had paid the price,
With eyes stern, jaws set, heads turned slightly sideways—but not backward;
Seen them wait and wait the word, fierce, determined, cold-pinched, blue,
Then go charging, silent, drawn, fearful, fearless ghosts, at dawn—
Yet I still think Charley Jones the bravest man I ever knew.

Charley was clean-cut and strong, mind and body nothing wrong;
Hailed from good old Kansas City, but he mostly wasn't home;
For he dreamed of writing stories, stirring tales of deeds and glories,
And to learn what life was made of had to pack his kit and roam.
Tramp? Not much—he was a worker—not one bone of him a shirker—
He was sending home good money every month from near or far;
And one night, down near the border, some late train (mistake in order)
Hit a "block" crew's trestled hand-car. Charley Jones was on that car.

Charley woke up on a bed two days later—two-thirds dead.
He'd been struck a thousand miles from where surgeons domiciled.
From his heart down to his knees he'd been crushed beyond all ease—
But his mother and his sister knelt beside him, so he smiled.
Well he knew he'd never rise, but he saw their anguished eyes,
Knew them harder hit than he was by the cruelty of fate;
He was all their strength and pride—so he faced them eager-eyed,
Smiling so they felt he meant it as he whispered: "This is *great!*"

With the faith which must be heeded he spoke on: "It's what I needed,
I was strong and proud of body, and it earned me daily bread.
It was making me a coward thinking payward more than toward
What I'd dreamed of—it was making me forget I had a head.

I must clothe it, I must feed it, knowing daily I should need it,
Thoughtless of the vision splendid—couldn't spare *it* any time.
So my good luck came and knocked me where I'll have the time, and shocked me
Wide awake—don't think it mocked me. It has put me where I'll climb."

Charley Jones was twenty-two, and I'm sure in heart he knew
Every day he lived he'd suffer, till his waning strength gave out,
Yet that day he made the blow all his own—they mustn't know—
Never in his darkest moments must he let them grieve or doubt.
And I knew him ten years after in his home of love and laughter
He'd convinced them—*proved*, by glory!—he was happier than when whole;
Still a struggler, not quite great, not quite master of his fate,
But above all men I've known of he was captain of his soul.

Ten long years—dear God, how long!—he wrote tales and bits of song,
Kept his household—proud and happy, kept it hopeful—kept it *fed*.
Never, even at the end, did he let one prying friend
See behind his mask of laughter and the gay, glad things he said.
Yet he wore a mask, I know, though he swore it wasn't so,
All those years of constant anguish. So when now I call the roll
Of the heroes I have known one must always stand alone—
Charley Jones, whose thought for others made him master of his soul.

THIS goes back to a story of J. Allan Dunn's last summer. He made a slip about the British flag. The following is one of the letters calling attention to it, together with Mr. Dunn's reply:

The Lambs Club, New York

May I not, as an old Camp-Fire comrade of the British Navy (long associated with the American Navy, and one who knew Robley Evans when he was commander of the *U. S. S. Yorktown;* Rodman when he was a senior lieutenant; Dewey at Hong-Kong just before his dash on Manila etc.), suggest that when J. Allan Dunn, in his splendid story, "The Three Traders," tells of *McIntosh* hoisting the *red* cross of St. Andrew on a *white* ground as his national emblem, he is in imminent danger of bringing about strained relations between Celt and Celt or Celt and Gael? The *red* cross is that of St. Patrick. The fly (if *McIntosh* had any regard for his patron saint, or any enthusiastic love of Haggis porridge, and last but not least Highland Dew—to say nothing of patriotism) he should have hoisted would have been the *white* cross of St. Andrew on a blue ground!

With real greetings to yourself, J. Allan Dunn, and all his friends of the Camp-Fire, cheero (of the Navy—not "Cheerio" of the Army—though hats-off to them).—LESLIE PALMER.

P. S. *Cheers* was the original *Naval* toast. It became *egotistical* when it came ashore!

Pawling, New York.

Being Irish, I suppose I saw red where it should have been blue. Call it a slip of the pen, call it mental color-blindness but don't, as one man suggested, call it a case of too much Scotch.

All I can say is that I know better. Was I not born in England of British but Irish parents? Have I not often drawn in younger days the Cross of Saint Andrew, of Patrick and of George, superimposed to make up the Union Jack?

I, too, knew Rodman when he was skipper of the *U. S. Tug Iroquois* and commandant of the naval station at Honolulu. I knew Evans and Dewey and Casey Morgan and Osterhaud and Frisky Fearnought Freeman. I have cruised with them in wartime and in peace in the old times of A. D. (Ante Daniels) when they served that gorgeous sherry on the *Oregon* and the *Maryland* had a trick of passing the guest on down the line until, when they called on him for a speech at dinner, he was often bilged.

And I thank you, Leslie Palmer, for your kindly note. Hoffman suggests that, knowing my origins, he is amused at seeing me hooked about an English flag—by which means a British flag—but hooked is a mild, mild term. I have been gored and I am still bleeding. I have been attacked cynically, sardonically, viciously, and I am deflated. But it was not a case of too much Scotch. You can't get too much Scotch these days. I made a bull which should be forgiven in an Irishman.

Moreover they ought to have caught it in the editorial offices. Thus and thus only can I feebly pass the buck.

Meekly and repentantly.—J. ALLAN DUNN.

SOMETHING from Harold Lamb in connection with his complete novelette in this issue. I don't read enough history these days for my opinion on histories to be worth anything, but I have a strong hunch, not coming altogether from thin air, that Mr. Lamb is right in what he says about modern historians in the bulk.

Berkeley, California.

It is the story of an Arab, in Constantinople, in 1204 when the crusaders took the city from the Greek emperor.

It introduces a new character, *Khalil*, the Beduin. That is, an Arab of the Ibna or elder chieftains, of al-Yamen, or the desert country. I've become quite interested in these chaps. Every place we follow a Venetian or Genoese or French or English pathfinder, an Arab seems to have been there before with his horses or his ship. They were in China four centuries or so before Marco Polo—the first authentic account of the Chinese is that of Abu Zeid al Hassan, about 900 A. D. They rambled through Central Asia with their caravans, and their ships penetrated to India before Spain and Portugal emerged from the dark ages. They were born fighters, of course, and lovers of horses.

ALSO they were chivalrous fighters. A crusader's code of ethics was much less formidable than that of a clean-strain Arab, and there were no indulgences issued in Yamen. Two different codes of course, and there were rogues as well as splendid men on both sides—crusader and paynim.

But the Arabs and the *saracin*-folk were more intelligent than our *Croises*, more courteous, and usually more daring. They had a sense of humor. Remember that the Bagdad of Haroun al-Raschid, the Alexandria of the Ptolemies, the observatories, academies and the gardens of all Near-Asia were their heritage. Read side by side, the Moslem chronicles of Ibn Athir, Raschid, or Ibn Battuta are much more human, expressive and likable than the monkish annals of the crusaders—Matthew of Edessa, Matthew Paris, Archbishop William of Tyre. And, strangely enough, these Arab and Persian historians bring out values that have been unknown to us, at least in our histories of the crusades. They are very fair—more so than our chroniclers—in giving an enemy credit for gallantry. Figures like Alexander the Great (Iskander) and Richard of England (Ricard Malik) were talked about in Asia for centuries, and became heroes of the first magnitude.

Our existing stock of histories of the crusades is unfortunate. The early stock was taken from the main church chronicles, and consisted of a lot of silence and a great deal of fanfare, exaggerating the deeds of the *Croises*. Then appeared the cynical history, making much hay of the fact that the crusaders usually fought a losing fight, and were sometimes the very opposite of saints. Lastly the ultra-modern history has cropped up, making much of the superstition and ignorance of the crusaders, and tracing out with great pains the "advantages" of the crusades, in establishing contact between the East and West, introducing Asia's inventions into Europe, etc.

In decrying the exaltation of the crusaders, and in hunting out the mercantile gains from their efforts and deaths, we have somehow rather lost sight of the intimate personal story of the crusaders—which a reading of the Arabic chronicles serves to bring back to us.

SO MUCH of our history and biography and fiction, too, has been written out of prejudice, or a preconceived bias. "Catherine the Great was one of the most gifted women of all time" *vs.* "Catherine the Great was one of the greatest—of all time." "Alexander of Macedonia was a superman" *vs.* "Alexander was mad." You know how those things shape up.

Nowadays one can not enter a book shop without seeing on all sides "The Truth About This" or "Outlines of That." The desire of readers to learn is real enough. The fault is with the writers, who lack both scholarship and inclination to devote months or years to finding out the truth as nearly as possible. The result is that the very modern histories are usually "outlines" right enough.

Scholarship seems to have died in the last century. Anyway, I'll wager you can't name a better story of the crusades than Scott's "Talisman." Sir Walter admitted that he wrote from meagre information—there was little to be had in his day—but he was a scholar and a conscientious student of his epoch.

History, our dictionaries say, is "a narrative devoted to the exposition of the unfolding of events." Discarding this husk of Latin phrasing, the dictionary says that history is the story of what actually happened. By the way, it's interesting to notice that the dictionary ranks fiction equally with chronicle. And "unfolding" is just the word. What is history but the uncovering or the unfolding of the past? The story of what certain men did—their adventures, because it's more interesting to read about what they did than what they were. And easier to get at the truth, that way.

It's so absurd, to sit down and start in to whitewash some individual or people and call it history. And equally absurd to assemble a few facts, and draw personal conclusions from them, without taking the trouble to get at *all* the facts.

This is beginning to wander. But it's so tiresome to look for history in many modern publications and find only personal opinions, deductions, villification or deification, and references to faulty authorities. And so many modern "historical" novels, written by hasty Americans are enough to make Sienkiewicz or Tolstoy walk the earth again.

GETTING back to our Arab—it's been awfully refreshing to read about the crusaders from Arabic sources. But "The Shield" is not a story of the crusades—the *Croises* figure only in the taking of Constantinople. I've tried to reconstruct the city as it was then, with its after-glow of Greek and Roman splendor.

The garden of the Patriarch was there, and the Place of Horses, as in the story. I've told the story as *Khalil* might have told it—many of the incidents befell Ibn Battuta in real life. The storming of the city follows the actual event, except that the siege actually lasted longer. Regarding the disparity in numbers between the crusaders and the Greeks, Mills relates that the crusaders numbered twenty thousand while there were four hundred thousand men capable of bearing arms within the city. Villehardin confirms this, and DuCange. And it is borne out by others.

Khalil rather appeals to me. Also an Arab story to the effect that the sword of Roland—Durandal—was taken by the *saracins*, after the death of the hero, and hidden away in Asia Minor.

So I'm thinking of a second tale, dealing with the search for the sword by a crusader.—HAROLD LAMB.

THE following statement was written expressly for Camp-Fire by Frank C. Cross, Director, The National Americanism Commission, The American Legion. I have so much to say about it that I shall let myself say very little. The Americanism work of the Legion is one of the biggest, most important and best movements in the United States today. I am tempted to say *the* best and most important. The fate of the American nation hinges upon its success. Do we, because of wealth, power and blind materialism, sink into decay as have all other nations in history who have reached our stage of development? Or are there

still soul and intelligence enough within us to rescue us and send us on to a greater and better greatness?

For the larger part of twenty years I have dreamed of some powerful agency to undertake the work of regeneration from within. The dream has come true. No other existing organizations are better fitted to the work than the Legion in cooperation with the Boy Scouts. Before you challenge that statement, think it over.

There is one thing more to say. These two organizations are the biggest nucleus for real patriotism and real Americanism. What are the other patriotic organizations going to do? Each follow its own little path, giving us an army of forces with no common campaign and no general staff? Or are they big enough and patriotic enough to forget about themselves and, considering nothing but the best interest of their common country, fall in line with the Legion and the Scouts? Not under them, but with them. Here is the acid test of their patriotism and disinterestedness. And of their intelligence.

BUILDING FOR A BETTER AMERICA

A Chapter of Adventure in a People's Romance

Rise and fall of nations, vast expansions of mighty empires, migrations of whole peoples, Titanic conflicts, crusades and holy wars, conquests of nature by man's inventions and man's energies, mighty spirit stirrings among great populations—what have the masters of the creative imagination to show that betters this epic story of mankind? With all the wealth of color, all the riches of fancy that poet and novelist, dramatist and romancer, have lavished upon their tales of "high romance," never has brain of man conceived more thrilling tales than the adventures and romances of history.

And in all the sweep of time since the days when Rome and Greece were glories yet to be, when flowers found today decking some Pharaoh after a sleep of centuries bloomed fresh beside the Nile, the greatest, probably, of all adventures is that wherein a few scattering bands of wanderers set about to carve out a new nation on the North American continent. To count over again some of the exploits which have gone into the making of that nation—it is like reading a novel full of thrills and full of color.

TAKE the landing on the rock-bound New England coast, Jamestown and Pocahontas and Captain Smith, Hendrik Hudson and the *Half Moon*. The Boston Tea Party, Saratoga and Valley Forge, the coming of LaFayette and Von Steuben, Washington victorious at Yorktown, sea exploits in '12, heroic deeds of '61 and '65, Santiago and Manila Bay, Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood and the Argonne, when every nation and all the seas were lashed with turmoil.

These—and the steamboat, telegraph, telephone, airplane and other inventions heaped upon inventions—are incidents in the pioneer march of millions from the day when their cockle-shell boats touched the Atlantic shore until, leaping mountains and prairies and plains and other mountains and carving out homes and creating great cities where before there were vast expanses of unbroken wilderness, these millions, many times multiplied, stood masters of a continental empire extending from ocean to ocean and from Canada and the Great Lakes to the Gulf and Mexico.

That is to take but small account of the great influence of the United States upon the spirit of men and upon their institutions. From the very beginning of our history as a nation that influence has been exerted in ever-widening spheres among all peoples—from the adoption of the Declaration of Independence with its doctrine of rights and liberties on that fourth day of July a century and a half ago, the drafting of the Constitution as the framework of a government of law and order, the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine and its guarantee of the Americas against foreign despotism, the opening of Japan to modern civilization and the freeing of Cuba on down to the sending of millions overseas in the great crusade for liberty and democracy in 1917.

Stirring events, great movements, heroic deeds, surely; and heroic days those in which these deeds were wrought! But other deeds, other problems, other times await; and times as stirring, problems as thrilling, deeds as great as those of the years that are past. For, as Richard Watson Gilder says in his poem, "The Heroic Age:"

"He speaks not well who doth his time deplore,
Naming it new and little and obscure,
Ignoble and unfit for lofty deeds.
All times are modern in the time of them,
And this no more than others. Do thy part
Here in the living day, as did the great
Who made old days immortal! So shall men,
Gazing long back to this far-looming hour,
Say: 'Then the time when men were truly great;
Though wars grew less, their spirits met the test
Of new conditions; conquering civic wrong;
Saving the State anew by virtuous lives;
Guarding the country's honor as their own,
And their own as their country's and their sons';
Defying leagued fraud with single truth;
Not fearing loss, and daring to be pure.
When error through the land raged like a pest,
They calmed the madness caught from mind to mind
By wisdom drawn from old, and counsel sane;
And as the martyrs of the ancient world
Gave Death for man, so nobly gave they Life:
Those the great days, and that the heroic age.'"

It is a great adventure this, meeting "the test of new conditions, conquering civic wrongs, defying leagued fraud with single truth" and giving a lifetime of service under a compelling sense of personal obligation to community, State and nation. It is precisely that adventure, a chapter in the great romance of building a better and finer and nobler America, of making Americans better, upon which The American Legion has embarked under the direction of the National Americanism Commission. The Legion entered upon that adventure in the spirit of consecration to the common welfare and of

devotion to the nation which carried its members through trench and wire entanglement and a very hell of carnage and agony and death.

THE Americanism work carried on by the Legion is thus a ministry of the spirit—born of the spirit of the young warriors who went forth in the Great War like knights on crusade in the days of old; and striving to fire the spirit of an entire people with a compelling consecration to duty. The Legion stresses the responsibilities and the obligations of the individual to the nation, obligations and responsibilities as great, surely, in time of peace as in time of war. It combats the self-centered egotism which would profit always by the national well-being but never contribute to it. It clings fast to all that which is proven by experience good in the national institutions. It teaches respect for those institutions. It cultivates a due sense of the nation's contribution to the advancement of mankind and the betterment of human relationships. It opposes all movements subversive of government. It works for a better citizenship and a better preparation for it. Forward-looking in every phase of its Americanism activity, the Legion seeks to build broadly and firmly for a future progress in America to surpass the truly remarkable achievements of the first century and a half of the nation's existence.

IMMEDIATELY after the formation of the Legion, it was confronted with three urgent problems of great magnitude. These problems were: Rehabilitation of disabled veterans, care of orphaned and dependent children of veterans and the finding of jobs for thousands of men who, their war service ended, were thrown back into civilian life without means or opportunity of earning a livelihood. To make matters indescribably worse, the country was plunged simultaneously into a severe business depression.

The National Americanism Commission, in which is vested responsibility for the Legion's Americanism activities, undertook as its first great task to help in solving the problem of veteran unemployment. A nation-wide drive was launched in the spring of 1922. Hotels and lunch-rooms were opened in many cities and $1,000,000 is estimated to have been spent to give first relief to veterans walking the streets hungry and ragged and with shoes out at toe or hiking thus from city to city in the fruitless search for labor. Permanent employment was found for 500,000 veterans, and temporary jobs for 200,000 more.

THE regular Americanism activities of the Legion fall into six classifications. They are: Education, juvenile activities, community betterment, patriotic activities, Americanization of the foreign-born and anti-radicalism efforts.

In education the fundamental purpose of the Legion is to arouse in the citizen a greater interest in the needs and problems of education and to inculcate in him a saner attitude toward his schools and their function. The Legion believes that government of the people, by the people, for the people can not endure except with an intelligent citizenry, and that no people can perform the duties of citizenship intelligently except as it is informed. That presupposes education of a fairly high average excellence. The Legion believes that it is the citizen's duty, therefore, to support education generously and to insist vigorously upon the best educational arrangements attainable.

The Legion does not believe that the citizen should interfere in professional details of school work. Education is an expert problem and demands the attention of experts. Courses of study are not to be legislated under the passing breezes of popular excitement. Neither is outside force to be applied to impose a partial, limited and group view upon the schools. The Legion believes in a policy of hands off for the public schools, to the end that they shall not be footballs of partizan politics or the prey of momentary frenzies. In education the truth, the whole truth and not a half-truth, is the one thing to be sought, as the Legion sees it.

TO EMPHASIZE the importance of education, the National Americanism Commission in 1921 instituted American Education Week and carries it on jointly with the National Education Association and the United States Bureau of Education and in cooperation with 150 other national organizations and agencies. In this way the message of education has been carried each year into thousands of communities and to millions of people.

Another enterprize in the Legion's educational program is the school award. Medals are granted throughout the nation to eighth-grade boys and girls who excel in leadership, courage, honor, scholarship and service.

In its juvenile activities the Legion fosters Boy Scout work, promotes other worthy forms of boys' work and sponsors organized athletics. A national committee has been formed with regional and State committees to cooperate closely with the Scout organization. Camping and hiking, together with special problems which arise locally, engage the Legion's particular attention in this field. Scout troops have been organized or adopted by many posts.

THE National Americanism Commission's work for the promotion of a more general participation in amateur athletics and in physical recreation is animated by a purpose to build for the future of the nation, not only in physical ways but also and more especially along the lines of good citizenship. The Commission bears in mind the shocking revelations of the war as to physical unfitness among the young men of the nation, which led to the rejection on physical grounds of as many as fifty per cent. of all the men called to the colors from certain States.

The Commission recognizes especially the many points in common between the good sportsman and the good citizen. The good sportsman and the good citizen have each learned respect for rules. Each has likewise learned fair play, loyalty, team-work, gameness and democracy.

The commission desires to gain for the nation the benefit of the advantages to be had by that training in sportsmanship which comes through active participation in sports. To that end, it has entered upon a program of athletic activity among the boys of the nation, of which the first phase is the All-American Baseball League.

Plans for organizing this league were formulated in 1925 and are now in process of development. Active steps in this work were under way in twenty-one States by the opening of spring. Leagues enroll boys between the ages of twelve and seventeen. Contests are planned for the local communities,

congressional districts, States, regions and sections of the country to determine their respective champions. They will culminate in a Junior World's Series to be staged each year in connection with the national convention of the Legion.

The work in baseball is intended merely as the first phase of a broad athletic program. This program is expected to go far beyond the more or less local and disjointed efforts of posts and departments in the past, which have resulted in county, district and state track meets and similar events.

A SURVEY of several hundred typical Legion posts indicates that nearly forty per cent. of the 10,000 posts now have under way some definite project purely for community betterment. Another twenty per cent., this survey shows, have projects partly for the community and partly for the post, such as a club house which is also a community center. The Legion has entered every phase of the field of community betterment and tends to increasing activity in this direction.

The community service program, which the National Americanism Commission counsels and guides posts in carrying on all over the country, has as its purpose to assist the local community in realizing to the full upon all its advantages and to supply specific needs with suitable services. The first step is to discover the service which the post can best give. This is done by running coupons in the local newspapers asking the readers of the papers to indicate what they feel to be the work for the general good which the Legion post can best undertake.

Work of this sort may be carried on independently, and will be so carried on, if it can best be accomplished in that way. Where the work can be done most effectively in cooperation with some other agency, that is the way in which the Legion elects to do it. As specific examples of this cooperative attitude, the national organization of the Legion through the National Americanism Commission cooperates in National Music Week, in Fire-Prevention Week, in Forest Week, in the work of the National Crime Commission and of other bodies, and in a wide range of other activities for the common good.

TO CULTIVATE true patriotism as against chauvinism is a prime object of the National Americanism Commission. The Legion makes an earnest effort to discourage a blatant, swashbuckling nationalism. It makes an even more vigorous effort to encourage an intelligent respect for American institutions and to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to community, State and nation. Concrete instances of this phase of Legion activity are the get-out-the-vote campaigns of 1924 and 1926, in which the Legion participated in a strictly non-partizan way and with no other object than to induce citizens to exercise their right and perform their duty at the ballot-box.

The Legion in the very act of organization took a solemn pledge to "uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States." It has, in line with that pledge, joined in efforts to increase understanding of and respect for the Constitution as the guarantee of the nation's liberties, institutions and orderly processes of government. The first day of American Education Week is set aside as Constitution Day and is given over to a consideration of the significance of the Constitution to the nation —the Constitution, which was pronounced by one of the greatest statesmen of modern times to have been the "most perfect instrument ever struck off at one time by the brain and purpose of man." The National Americanism Commission is now conducting a campaign to have the Constitution read regularly at meetings of Legion posts. It also distributes copies of this immortal document to further popular knowledge of it and of its provisions.

The national flag code, formulated by a conference called by the Legion in 1923, is now accepted as the authority on flag etiquette. Thousands of copies have been distributed. The code is the Legion's outstanding effort to promote ceremonial respect for the institutions and emblems of America.

IMMIGRATION and naturalization are of particular concern to the National Americanism Commission. The Commission believes that the flood-gates to the nation should be carefully guarded in the interest both to the nation as a whole and of the immigrants now here. Through the National Legislative Committee, the enactment of legislation to this end is actively supported.

The Legion is vastly interested in the Americanization of the foreign born now here. It has fostered State legislation creating night schools for aliens and for the 10,000,000 illiterates in the country and has found support for this work in other ways where such legislation could not be obtained. Notable progress has been made in this work in several States. The best illustration of this activity is found in Oklahoma, where night schools have been established.

Special ceremonies attendant upon naturalization are sponsored by the Legion. These ceremonies are intended to recognize in a fitting way the alien's acceptance into American citizenship and to dignify that extremely important step. In certain communities a plan of consistent cooperation between native and naturalized Americans is in effect with the object of bringing about a more thorough amalgamation.

MOVEMENTS aiming at the overthrow of government come in for watchful attention by the National Americanism Commission. The Commission enjoys the cooperation of various agencies scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific which provide it with accurate confidential reports on communist and other radical activities. A bulletin on these developments is issued each two weeks to State Legion officers and to others who request it.

To communism the Legion is particularly opposed, because it advocates the violent overthrow of government. The tactics of communism, it maintains, have placed its adherents in the category of criminals and they should be treated as such. In dealing with these revolutionaries the Legion advocates only the orderly processes established by law and executed by the properly constituted governmental authorities, believing that course to be in line with the very keynote of the American idea of government. And it stresses not the quantity but the quality—the revolutionary character—of the radical movement.

In these various ways the National Americanism Commission of The American Legion goes about its task of contributing with all that in it is to the upbuilding of an America that shall be greater and finer and nobler with the years. A great task,

truly, this of strengthening the national character, of helping to lay the foundation for a national life which happily may escape those pitfalls and lassitudes and evils which have meant the decline and extinction of so many empires and republics under the sun. A great task, a splendid task and a wonderful chapter in a great romance, the romance of a people's fate!

These people are working at the roots of things. Most reformers fiddle with the twigs and branches.

They oppose radicalism that is subversive of American law and government. Fine. I am glad to note, however, that their present attitude toward radicalism in general seems to have modified from the extreme and very blind intolerance of some years ago when their idea seemed to be to suppress radicalism even if in doing it they themselves trampled into the dust the American rights of free speech and free assemblage.

I wish they would add another plank to their platform—opposition to the kind of conservatism that is as dangerous to American ideals as is any radicalism however red. I mean this same conservatism to which they themselves held when they were younger, less experienced and less wise than they are today.

For this kind of conservatism is not conservatism at all, but radicalism, radicalism of a most dangerous and pernicious kind, for it is either hypocritical and disguised or else stupidly unaware that it is radicalism. It is exactly this kind of conservatism that is ever ready to knock a radical speaker off his soap-box, prevent a radical meeting, disarm the citizenry through anti-weapon laws and at any time themselves become open rebels against the Constitution of the United States by trampling on the Constitutional rights of free speech, free assembly, the right to bear arms or any other rights named in our fundamental law. And, even if all the lawyers in the world rise up to prove these statements of rights in our Constitution mean little or nothing legally, they are nevertheless principles which the American people have always considered part of their heritage. Who decides what are the rights of the American people—the American people themselves or a bunch of lawyers?

By which you will see that I myself am a very radical radical and doubtless a dangerous character, for I'm the wild-eyed kind of radical who believes the Constitution of the United States *is* the fundamental law of the United States and that it ought to be enforced despite all the lawyers, politicians and vested interests between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

I'm so violently radical that, in interpreting the Constitution, I believe it should be interpreted to mean what the bulk of the American people believe it to mean and wish it to mean, not what lawyers, politicians and their employers can twist it into. It's the people's Constitution, not the lawyers'. Nor even the politicians'. Nor does it belong to the employers of both of them.

If its verbiage worries the lawyers, let's correct the verbiage instead of scrapping the whole spirit and real meaning of the Constitution.

The Legion comes to us of Camp-Fire direct and in particular because it considers us the kind of Americans who can do most, and will do most, to further real patriotism and real Americanism. They don't ask us to help the Legion. They ask us to help the work that both they and we believe in. If you can do this work better than the Legion, go to it. The point is to get this work done.

What are *you* going to do? Play golf? Earn some more money? Be a shirker, deserter and parasite? And then go on thinking you're a good American?

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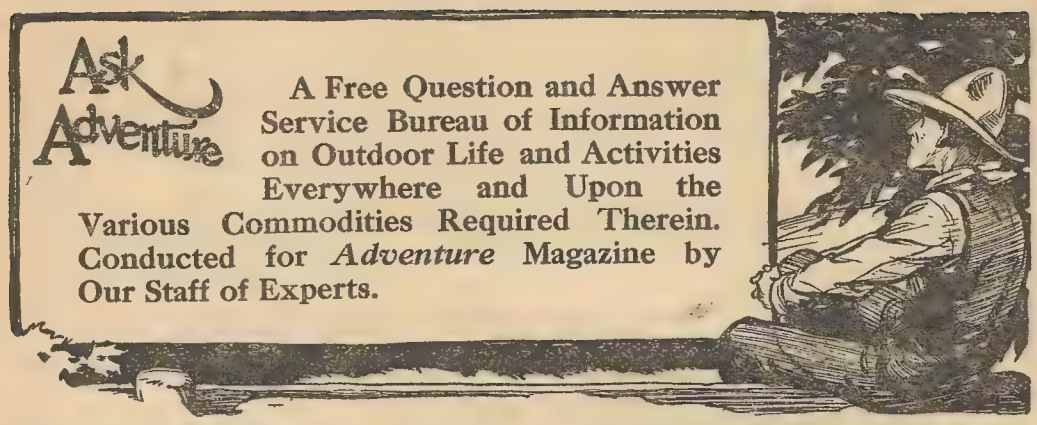

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DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect; how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. (Editor to be appointed.)

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the Forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

(Editor to be appinted.)

J.—Navy Matters

LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 241 Eleventh Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. International and constitutional law concerning Naval and maritime affairs.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, Museum of American Indians, 155th St. and Broadway, N. Y. City. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard, the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St. and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write LAURENCE JORDAN, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agrl., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care of *Adventure*.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, MILTON A. RECKORD, Secretary, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Garbanzos

PROBABLY the most important of the staple foods raised in Central America. The following comprehensive study of the growing of this vegetable has been prepared by our expert, Mr. Charles Bell Emerson.

Among the staple foods raised in Central American regions is one that is used almost daily on the tables of rich and poor; this is the *garbanzo*, or chick-pea. They are successfully grown also in the State of Sonora, Mexico, on the alluvial plains near the mouths of the Mayo and Yaqui Rivers, where the altitude is but little above sea level, although they are also grown farther inland at altitudes of three hundred feet, more or less, and with more or less success.

The plant is very tender and subject to injury by frost. During the growing season the temperature ranges from 70 degrees F. to the freezing point. At planting time, in October, it ranges from 50 to 90 degrees F. The average rainfall in the *garbanzo* region in the Yaqui valley is nine inches and in the Mayo valley thirteen inches. No rain falls during the growing season of this crop, and the growers depend entirely upon irrigation, for the rains begin in July and end in October, just before the first planting begins.

THE method of irrigation of the *garbanzo* fields most commonly employed is the "*bolsa*" or "basin" system, the fields having a border and being flooded in August and September with water from the ditches or freshets. When the *bolsas* have dried sufficiently, then the plowing, harrowing, and planting begin.

In the majority of the fields no irrigating is done during the growing season of the plant, as the moisture retained by the soil is usually sufficient to mature the crop. In the Yaqui valley, where abundant water is always available, some irrigating is done from the supply ditches during the growing season. The normal yield per acre is from twenty to thirty-five bushels. The exact time of planting depends upon the arrival of the flood waters in the Mayo valley, where all the water for the irrigating ditches is taken from the river by gravity, but some, or most, of the crop is planted in October.

The *garbanzos* are harvested in May, when the plants are pulled up by hand in the field and turned over so they will dry thoroughly. They are then carried in bunches to central points in the field where a threshing floor has been made on smooth beaten ground. The harvest workmen are paid at the rate of one dollar per sack of two hundred and twenty pounds. The pre-war prices obtained by producers of *garbanzos* averaged about ten dollars per sack of two hundred and twenty pounds. The present prices range from eleven to fourteen dollars per sack, delivered at the railway cars. Part of the 1919 crop

was badly spoiled by heavy rains and sold for as low as seven dollars per sack. There are no distributing markets for *garbanzos* in Mexico, practically all of the crop being shipped by rail to Guaymas for export to Spain and the West Indies, or by railway to Nogales and thence to New Orleans for export to Europe and the West Indies.

At Guaymas and Nogales the peas are fumigated, regraded and sacked for export. The officers of the more important buyers and distributors are in New York, New Orleans, Havana, Porto Rico, and Spanish ports.

THE purchasing houses usually have the agents on the ground before and during the harvest, when contracts are entered into for the sale and delivery of the crop. In many cases advances, at high rates of interest, are made on the crop to growers with limited capital. During the war a serious scarcity of sacks prevailed in Sonora and Sinaloa, owing to British embargoes, with the result that some peas were shipped to the American border loose in box cars and were there packed in any kind of sacks available.

In former years the *garbanzos* were graded in machines in the fields and at Guaymas before shipment by water, but very few are graded now, since the buyers prefer them as they come from the fields. The grains run usually from forty to sixty to the ounce, and sell accordingly, being graded at destination or at transshipment points.

In a report submitted by American Consul, B. F. Yost, dated April 17, 1919. "Although large quantities of these peas are threshed by means of hand flails or are tramped out on the threshing floors, a few years ago threshing machinery was introduced, along with grading and cleaning machines. As the average farmer can not afford to purchase agricultural implements, sometimes groups of farmers club together, sharing the expense of purchasing and operating, although occasionally this is done by the buyers of the crop. It is thought that when the political and economic conditions are more settled there will be increased demands for plows, harrows, seeders and other articles in general use, not only on the *garbanzo* farms but on other farms as well. Probably the best way to reach this market would be through implement dealers in Guaymas or Navojoa.

"It is estimated that there are at least twenty-five *garbanzo* cleaning and grading machines in the district which have not been in use since 1913, and in which about $50,000 has been invested. Ten of the machines are standing idle at Guaymas and another ten in the Mayo valley. That they are no longer used is attributed to the fact that the purchasers prefer to buy the product threshed in the old way, and under the circumstances there are no openings for the sale of this kind of machinery.

"ORDINARILY the *garbanzos* are packed in one-hundred-kilo (kilo is 2.204 pounds) jute sacks; but owing to the British embargo on all jute, there has been a great scarcity of bagging during the past two years, so that some of last year's crop was shipped loose in the cars, while some was packed in any kind of sacks obtainable. Ordinarily the sacks are forty-four by twenty-six inches in size, holding two hundred and twenty pounds, weigh two and one-half to three pounds, and cost up to sixty cents apiece wholesale. The duty amounts to ten to fourteen cents apiece, depending on the weight and weave. The same class of bags is also used for transporting beans, corn, wheat, and other farm products.

"Flour sacks in general use here are white cotton, thirty-six by twenty-six inches in size, and hold one hundred and fifty pounds of flour. At present very few ore sacks are used in this district, as the products of the mines are shipped either as ore or bullion and seldom in the form of concentrates. The rice sacks are of white cotton material, thirty-eight by eighteen inches, and hold one hundred pounds.

"The cooperative rice association in the Yaqui valley orders its sacks direct from exporters in the United States, chiefly from San Francisco, California. In normal times practically all sacks for the shipment of *garbanzos* are furnished by the New York brokers, whose purchasing representatives are here on the ground as the harvest approaches. Nearly all local general merchants also deal in sacks of various kinds. Practically the whole output of *garbanzos* of Sonora is purchased by firms in Porto Rico, Cuba, and Spain, in normal times being loaded on board ship at Yavaros and Tobari in small vessels bound for Guaymas and Topolobampo, whence they are shipped direct.

"However, since the great scarcity of cargo space caused by the war, shipments have been chiefly by rail over the Southern Pacific of Mexico to Nogales, thence via El Paso to New Orleans and New York, where they are loaded on board ship and sent to their respective destinations. Owing to the excessive freight rates across the Atlantic, the Spanish markets have been but little depended upon, and the bulk of the crop was consumed by Cuba and Porto Rico, with limited quantities purchased by the United States and South America.

"Prices in 1918 were very high and the farmers obtained highly satisfactory results. The following are the freight rates in carload lots, per one hundred pounds: From Guamuchil (Sinaloa) to New York, $1.15½; to Galveston, $1; to New Orleans, $1.03; from San Blas (Sinaloa) and Navojoa and Esperanza (Sonora) to New York, $1.06½; to Galveston, $0.94; to New Orleans, $0.94. The shipment and marketing of the 1918 crop was handled entirely by the *Garbanzo* Growers' Association (Union *Garbanzera*) through a well-known financier and business man residing at Nogales, Sonora.

"Previously, the custom had been for buyers to come in person or by representative to contract for the growing crops, on advance payments of one-half the value of the estimated crop with a provision for deducting one dollar from current price as interest for the use of the money advanced. The *garbanzo* movements, according to railway statistics, reflect the situation brought about by the Yaqui Indian disturbances.

"While the farmers in the Yaqui valley adjacent to Esperanza and Cajeme were able to raise crops, those located farther down the river and in the outlying districts in this section were exposed to Yaqui raids and consequently did not try to cultivate their land or produce crops."

The standard-grade size for *garbanzos* is fifty-four to the ounce. The grading is done by means of sizers. (Sieves.)

Any other special questions on the subject will be answered on application.

Address, Charles Bell Emerson, *Adventure* Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif.

Lower California

PETRIFIED wood and bones and myriads of colors.

Request:—"As you are one of the A A men I am taking advantage of your offer for information about Lower California. I visited the petrified forest near Pinto Mountain recently, and was astounded not only at the petrified wood and bones but at the myriads of colors in the formation of Pinto Mountain as well. I have roved a great deal over the desert and mountains of the Southwest to the north of the line and until my visit to Pinto Mountain doubted the existence of anything of interest in the region south of the line. I am planning other trips south of the Border, and if you will give me the following information it will be appreciated greatly.

What books could I read covering the mineralogy of this region? Also on petrification and the location of other like deposits? Also the history of the State of Baja, California?

What is the tax on mineral exports from Mexico?

Where can I secure reliable maps of this section? Are there any rivers or lakes on the peninsula or would one be forced to pack all drinking water? Is there any game and of what description and where located?"—ROBERT SPERRY, Brawley, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Mahaffey:—For about the best publication on Lower California send money order to the Superintendent of Public Documents, Washington, D. C., asking for the "Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences," Vol. XVI, Lower California and its Natural Resources, which describes the peninsula very well, and tells a great deal about it.

Very few if any good maps are available. The publication I mention has a good large scale map of the peninsula. A good map of the southern part, sold by the American Geographical Society, New York, is called Baja California, Distrito Sur. They may have now a map of the northern half. You might write them.

As that part of Mexico is very little traveled, very few books have been written, although the publication I mention has a list of different articles which have been published, and from which you can look up a great deal about it. The best history of Lower California is in Bancroft's "North Mexican States." The Public Library should have a copy of it as this book—or rather work; it has thirty-nine volumes—is a standard book on Mexico, Central America, California and the West in general. Another book by North, called "The Mother of California," is good, and also "Camp and Camino in Lower California," is good. This last book is also by North.

For the tax on exports of minerals, ask the Mexican Consul in Calexico. However you could not take up any mineral claims even if you did locate anything worth having, as the present laws of Mexico prohibit it. There are many water holes and so forth, most of them are shown on the map I mention, others can be found by asking people familiar with the country.

Would suggest that in traveling over the desert south of the line and to the east of the big range of mountains or table land, that you do it in winter when it is not so hot, as the desert is a very poor place to travel over in the hot months.

Battleship Guns

HOW they are fired.

Request:—"I have been wondering how the firing of the big guns on battleships is controlled? Is deflection used? And what method of fire is used? Is bracket adjustment and percussion precision such as used in field artillery used? What kind of shells are fired?

Any information on this subject will be greatly appreciated."—JOHN AGEE, Ogden, Utah.

Reply, by Lieut. Greene—Fire control afloat is far more difficult than ashore. There are no fixed reference points as on land, also the gun always has a motion of some kind, which has to be allowed for, this making matters more complicated. Deflection is certainly used, in all gunnery, to allow for the right drift of the shell, as well as wind. Then in addition to this the gun itself as well as the target may both be in motion, probably in opposite directions. This calls for large use of deflection.

The range and direction being found, a method is used that is termed "straddling the target," this is firing short and firing over. Then the difference is split, the shots meanwhile are "spotted" from the top of the mast, or in very long ranges by aeroplane. When hits are obtained, the firing of the large guns are fired usually in salvos, either of the guns contained in one turret or of the whole broadside of the ship. The idea of the salvo is to cause as much damage as possible by each discharge.

It must be understood at the beginning that a gun will hit a point, theoretically, provided: (1) the gun is accurately pointed in elevation; (2) the gun is accurately pointed in azimuth (direction); (3) the sight is set at the exact sight bar range; (4) the sight is given the correct lateral setting for wind and speed (deflection); (5) the gun is accurately bore-sighted. Now if any of these is in error the result will be a miss.

Bore-sighting must be accurately done before target practice or battle. It consists of providing that the line through the center of the bore of the gun and the line through the optical center of the telescope of the sight when set at zero scale and zero deflection will meet at the target, considered at battle range, say 20,000 yards. The sight bar range setting and the lateral sight setting for wind and speed is under control partly. Different calibers of guns are usually controlled separately, that is to say; the heavy turret guns are controlled separately from others of lesser caliber; as an example the heavy gun control will be described.

First, the range of the enemy is found by an optical instrument called a range-finder. This gives, within definitely known areas, the actual distance of the target in yards. Finally to the actual distance of the target certain gunsight corrections are made involving atmosphere, powder, wind direction, speed, etc.

From this a sight bar range is determined. In the same manner the lateral setting of the sight is determined from direction of wind, speed of ship and speed of target. The sight bar range and deflection are sent to the sight setter at the gun. The gun is then fired. The shot falls, if accurately aimed, exactly according to the sight setting. If it is short of the target, the spotter estimates the number of

yards short, and if over the target then the number of yards over.

The spotter is trained carefully for this important task of estimating. His estimate of this amount is added to or subtracted from the range being used at the moment. In the same way a correction of lateral setting of the sight is made. The next shot or salvo receives identical treatment until the spotter is assured that the sight bar range and deflection are correct, and that the shells are hitting the target. This process of controlling the fire of great guns is defined as "fire control."

The weight of the shells used in the Naval service are: 14-inch—1400 pounds; 13-inch—1130 pounds; 12-inch—870 pounds; 10-inch—51 pounds; 8-inch—260 pounds; 7-inch—165 pounds; 6-inch—105 pounds; 5-inch—50 and 60 pounds; 4-inch—33 pounds; 3-inch—13 pounds.

The kind of shells are: Armor-piercing shell, a forged steel, point hardened shell for piercing the armor of ships, carries a bursting charge of high explosive. Common shell, cast steel, same form as armor-piercing shell, with a bursting charge of high explosive. Shrapnel, a cast steel body, the body being filled with a number of small balls packed in rosin or sulphur, a small bursting charge exploded by time fuse breaks up the body and scatters the balls.

Red Lake Again

THIS gold rush has brought so many inquiries that we are publishing another letter from Mr. Shaw supplementing his lengthy and more general one on this topic which appeared in the issue before last.

Request:—"I am twenty-eight years old. Roughed across the country. I am determined to make good.

Intend to go to the Red Lake country, Ontario, spring of 1927, prospecting for gold. Am getting a grub-stake; preparing physically for a rough trail. Please advise me as to outfit (for one or two), how to prospect, mining, etc., information as to gold and precious metals and reference books on same."—MICHAEL J. GREENE, Mahanoy City, Penna.

"P.S.—Does a U. S. citizen need a passport to go to Canadian country? Has he the same rights to prospect as a Canadian?"—M. J. G.

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—The Red Lake area has been pronounced O.K. by the Canadian Government, and many competent mining engineers. There is not a great deal of what is called "picture ore," that is, the big, coarse gold; but there is a great deal of fine gold well distributed over a large area. However, you'll need to go far afield by 1927! Right now the country is staked solid around the lake for about ten miles wide by twenty in length. Over 4,000 claims are recorded as having been staked. Prospectors are now going to Woman Lake, Rainy Lake, Rickaby Lake, etc. The ground for forty miles east of Red Lake toward Woman Lake is considered very good.

The average gold content is perhaps $10 to $15' per ton. Such ores must be worked in a large way by machinery, to cut down production costs; but with sufficient ore-tonnage a mine of that grade should pay big dividends.

Since there is known to be gold there, and the entire country in the northern portion of both Ontario and Quebec is well mineralized, it is a good place for a prospector to work. You need clothing for severe winters. Summers are 4 to 5 months in length between "break-up" and "freeze." The mosquitoes and deer flies are very bad in summer. You'll need a canoe, a *good* one! By this, I mean *not* one of the common "lake type." They are not built for white-water work. You must know how to pole a canoe up rapids.

An eighteen-foot canvas canoe—of the Gerrish type—will take two men and three months' grub and camp outfit through any water, anywhere. I know this, because I'm an old white-water man, myself. The Oldtown canoe is fair, but the Gerrish is better. Don't ever tackle a birch! Always need patching, and are too heavy on portages.

Your tools may be only a gold pan—sixteen-inch diameter; an iron mortar and pestle for pulverizing rock to pan; a good magnifying glass; a miner's striking hammer of four pounds; a prospecting pick; and I'd also take along a miner's pick and D-handle round-point shovel—No. 2 size. For working any claim, you'd need the added tools, forge, coal, etc., and must know how to drill and break rock; *i.e.* how to mine.

Summer clothing may be any of your old clothes. I advise taking wool for underwear—light for summer and heavy for winter. Plenty of wool sox. Have a rubber blanket, or water-proofed tarpaulin for ground-sheet, and of course you'll need tent and fly, blankets, and regular camp outfit.

Send for copy of "The Miner's Guide," by H. J. West, to The Scientific American Pub. Co., 233 Broadway, N. Y. Also, for a Dana's "Manual of Mineralogy," by Wm. E. Ford (same place).

Send to Canadian Geological Survey, Ottawa, Canada, for free literature and maps of Red Lake region.

Probably you'd best tackle it in spring, after break-up and by canoe. Winter work needs sledge-dogs and you can't drive, no doubt; also dogs cost $500 for team of four up there now. There is an airplane running from Hudson on the nearest railroad, charges 50 cents a pound for passengers or freight. There is mining recorder at Red Lake. Any one may prospect in Canada; but you need passports. Your fee is in shape of "free miner's certificate," costing $5 a year; obtained at any Canadian town. Get a copy of mining law of Canada, when you send to Ottawa. A lode claim is Canada is 1,500 feet square, with three stakes along center which must be on the vein. The books I name have data on locating and working a mine, outfit, etc.

The Red Lake region lies about 150 miles from Hudson, or Sioux Landing, on the Grand Trunk R. R. You go via Lac Seule, English river, and Keg Lake.

Latin America

AND some journals dealing with it.

Request:—"There are a few things I would like to know and I will certainly appreciate it if you will answer them.

What American companies are operating in South America?

What are the leading journals dealing with Latin America?

Why do companies find it hard to get men to go to South America to work?"—E. F. FINN, Springfield, Missouri.

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—The principal companies operating in South America owned or operated by Americans are:

Southern Brazil Lumber Co., Tres Barros, Parana, Brazil.

United Fruit Co., 17 Battery Place, New York City.

International Oil Co. (Standard Oil Sub.), 54 Church Street, Toronto, Ont.

London and Pacific Pet. Co. (S. O.), Talara, Peru.

Guayaquil and Quito R.R., Huigra, Ecuador.

Cerro de Pasco Copper Co., Cerro de Pasco, Peru.

Rio de Janeiro Light and Power Co., Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. (Canadian Co.)

Sao Paulo Light and Power Co., Sao Paulo, Brazil. (Canadian.)

Byington and Co., Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Chili Copper Co., and Chili Exploration Co., 120 Broadway, New York, N. Y. (Both big Guggenheim subs.)

Madera-Mamore R. R., 15 Broad Street, New York, N. Y.

A full list would take many pages, but these are the main ones.

The principal publication dealing with Latin America is the *Pan American Bulletin*, published by the Pan American Union, Washington, D. C., and which sells for something like 25c per copy. There is an English publication called the *West Coast Leader* published in Lima, Peru. There used to be a magazine published here in New York called the *South American Magazine* with an address on Lexington Avenue, but I have not seen it on the stands for some time. Don't know if it still is going or not. They were doing a pretty good job the last time I saw it.

The various *Supplements to Commerce Reports* published and distributed upon request by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Washington, D. C., give valuable information on any topic, and are good reading, being prepared in the shape of well-written articles and from quotations from consular reports. There is also the *Pan American Magazine* published on Fifth Avenue here in New York, but having no connection with the Pan American Union of Washington, D. C. The *National Geographic* now and again runs valuable articles concerning portions of Latin America. These are the principal ones.

I don't know of any companies having any great amount of trouble in getting men to go to South America to work. In fact, the last time I went around to the office of the Cerro de Pasco Company they had more applications than they were able to place by quite a healthy margin.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

DONOVAN, THOMAS. Left Syracuse, New York, 1911, for Detroit. Would now be 43 years old, 5 ft. 7 in. Probably working in auto shop. Please write or notify brother.—Address D. F. DONOVAN, 13 Swiss Avenue, Meriden, Conn.

KNIGHT, MRS. ANNA (Percy) nee Tabel. Please communicate with your brother. Alfred-Bodo and Aunt Clare deceased.—Address 3820 Maybelle Ave., 1, Oakland, California.

TABEL, CARL GEORGE OTTO. Left Stockton, Calif., 1919. Please write to brother Henry. Bodo and Mother deceased.—Address 3820 Maybelle Ave., Oakland, Calif.

BACHMAN, CHARLES AND EMIL. Please write to your mother as she is greatly worried. Would love to hear from you both.—Address MRS. LIBBIE GENECH, 822 Ninth Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

CARRIER, ROY L. Last seen in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1914. Dark hair, dark eyes. Went in army in Alaska Co. D, 14th Inf. Any word of his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address JAMES CHARLES CARRIER, Employ of City, Hospt., Louisville, Ky.

BACCHUS, JOHN PAUL. Was in Los Angeles, later in El Paso. Will greatly appreciate his address.—Address WILLIAM BACCHUS, 2 River Street, Danbury, Conn.

"ED MERRICK." If you see this, please write to JAMES WATSON, 1104 Harrison St., San Francisco, Calif., giving your present address.

ARMSTRONG, "SCOTT" H. (Tiny). Important news concerning the much talked of expedition to China and the Orient awaits you. A sure go this time; my mind is made up to take on that trip. Get in touch with me at once.—Your Buddy, JOSEPH C. ELLIS, 700 Realty Bldg., Savannah, Georgia.

PATTERSON, W. L. Was last heard from at San Salvador in 1923. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address ELLA PATTERSON, East Liverpool, Ohio, Box 200.

HOLL, GERALD FRANCIS. Engineer, tall, fair, red-gold hair, blue eyes. Fought with Canadians in the war. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his wife.—MRS. GERALD FRANCIS HOLL, 508 Dallas Road, Victoria, British Columbia.

HALE, EDNA. Last heard of at Bellevue Terrace Hotel, 6th and Figneroe Sts., Los Angeles, California, in 1923. Kindly communicate with her old friend.—MARTHA FRASER, R. F. D No. 2., Rocks, Harford County, Maryland.

CONLOGUE, BERNARD C. Please send me your address so I can write to you before I decide definitely what would be best for us to do. Love.—KATHRYN.

COOPER, MERVIN P. Last heard of in Los Angeles, Calif., in 1923. Served overseas in Headquarters Company, 119th Field Artillery, 32nd Division. Would greatly appreciate any communication as to his whereabouts.—Address JAMES E. BLACK, Box 1645, Dallas Texas.

J. C. L. and the MRS. Please write Jiggs and Ethel. We were in California, Washington and Oregon last summer.—Address MRS. P. V. WALKER, 606 Jackson, Amarillo, Texas.

JOE:—Things have happened. Write me at once. Have new car and will come for you. Tell you all about it when I get there over our pipes—and some empty glasses. I'll stay here till I get your address. Rush it. Our old plans are a go if we get together.—Address HARRY GERALD DARE, Longacre, Perry, Maine.

"SHORTY" KOFF. The young fellow you met in S. Main St. Theater, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, would like to hear from you.—Address HARRY ENGLE, 15 Cinderella St., Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

BANNON, CHARLES. Would like to hear from you and your son, Forest Lamb. Write soon.—Address MRS. N. HOWELLS, 58 William Street, South Bristane, W. Merron Road, W. Gabba, Australia.

LOAN, MARY. Would like to get in touch with you. Your sister.—Address MRS. E. INGRAM, 50 Cameron Street, Glasgow, N. W., Scotland.

"HODSHIRE," JAMES VICTOR or JIMMIE. Short, slim, scar on cheek, brown hair. Have news of financial importance for him.—Write J. R. DONALDSON, care of *Adventure*.

JUSTICE, RAYBORN, E. Seventeen years old, 5 ft. 8½ in. Brown spot on right leg just above knee. One or two small scars on forehead above eye. Mother is worried and ill over his disappearance. Any information will be appreciated.—Address J. LEE DAVIS, Swepsonville, N. C.

SHATSWELL, JOHN. Known as "Speedy Shatswell." Would like to hear from any one who knew me in C Troop, 2nd U. S. Cavalry or in F. Co., 5th U. S. Infantry. Please communicate with me in care of *Adventure*.

THE following will be inquired for in either the June 8th and July 8th, 1926, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

ANDERSEN, DAN; Bailey, Dr. William Curtiss, M. D.; Barnett, Jack; Battery D men, 2nd F. A.; Carr, Robert R.; Dean, Homer Thompson; Edkley, Thomas F.; Ex-Members of 13th Battalion Canadian R. R. Troops; Hackenschmidt, Kid; Kerney, Marshal; Lee, Henry; McCaffery (Relatives); "Niece" (mother's name—Mrs. Sallie A. Conway); Olsen, Edward; Olsen, Edwin Louis; O'Rourke, Pat; Osberne, Helen; Powell, George Francis; Powell, George Carlyle; Pulliam, W. A.; Seamester (Relatives); Spiegal, David; Stoolfire, George; Stoolfire, John; Strubbe, Captain G. A.; Thomas, Josid, S.; "Troop 1, 4th Cav."

THE TRAIL AHEAD

AUGUST 23RD ISSUE

Besides the complete novel and the two complete novelettes mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE HERITAGE — ***Harry G. Huse***
The breed was the son of his mother

THE TROOPER OF THE THESSALAINS — ***Arthur D. Howden Smith***
Alexander of Macedon annexes a new satrapy.

WHITE — ***Fiswoode Tarleton***
Carlsen sought the black conjure-man.

THE EARTHQUAKE STICK — ***William Byron Mowery***
The reindeer herds were starving.

A POINT OF HONOR — ***Wilkeson O'Connell***
Was the man worth it?

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE ISSUE following the next will contain *long* stories by W. Townend, Ralph R. Perry, and Charles Victor Fischer; and short stories by L. Patrick Greene, Raymond S. Spears, Ernest Haycox, Wilkeson O'Connell, Negley Farson, David Clarallan, Jr. and Post Sargent; stories of daring men in dangerous places up and down the earth.

Kodak as you go

Autographic Kodaks, $5 up

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y., *The Kodak City*

DANDRUFF?

Bottle Bacilli, the cause of Dandruff. Illustration reproduced from Hazen's "Diseases of the Skin." C. V. Mosby, Publisher.

Dandruff is a disease difficult to cure, but easy to check. Read below about the best way to combat it.

It's a danger signal!

DANDRUFF is a danger signal. If you have it you should do something about it.

Perhaps you never knew it before, but dandruff is a germ disease. It spreads by infection from personal contact, as with the common use of combs and brushes. Children, for instance, are never troubled with dandruff until actually infected by some contact.

Dandruff is a disease difficult to cure but easy to check. It has a tendency to reappear, unless properly treated and often brings with it the possible loss of hair or actual baldness.

The ideal treatment to combat dandruff conditions is the systematic use of Listerine, the safe antiseptic.

We have received hundreds of unsolicited letters from Listerine users, who are most enthusiastic in their claims for what Listerine will do in this way. If you are troubled with dandruff you owe it to yourself to try it.

Using Listerine for dandruff is not complicated. You simply douse it on your scalp, full strength, and massage thoroughly. The effect is antiseptic, cleansing and healing. And you will be amazed to see how this treatment, followed systematically, combats dandruff.

Moreover, Listerine will not discolor the hair nor will it stain fabrics.

Not only men but women have become devoted users of Listerine for this purpose—women, particularly, since bobbed hair has been in vogue and has made them more conscious of dandruff if it happened to be present.

Try Listerine this way. Used systematically, the results are almost miraculous! — *Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, U. S. A.*

LISTERINE

—and dandruff simply do not get along together